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The MINOR CHORD

A TALE OF THE MIDDLE WEST IN THE EARLY '70s.

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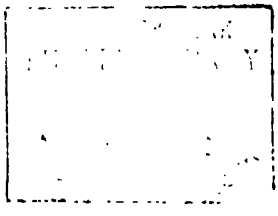


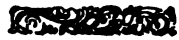
"O Lilian, Lilian!" I screamed, almost repenting my vow.
The chord was struck!
It was a plaintive minor, but one small note transposed it to a joyous major.

The Minor Chord

A Tale of the Middle West in the Early '70s

BY

JOE MITCHELL CHAPPLE



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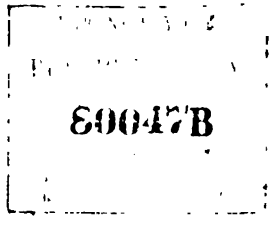

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JOE MITCHELL CHAPPLE
Boston, Mass.

MAR 19 1913

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"O Lilian, Lilian!" I screamed, almost repenting my vow.
The chord was struck!
It was a plaintive minor, but one small note transposed it to a joyous major.

"On you, my priceless little sweetheart, it all depends."

The low, rolling hills opposite appeared as mountains to my childish fancy.

A general merchandise store, to which the farmers came every Saturday from miles around to obtain needed supplies in exchange for butter and eggs.

"Well, Robert, it is cruel, it is wrong, but they will take the property."

"She wants three hundred dollars to pay that mortgage what's being sold today at her home."

It was on a gentle night in June.

"Come Thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy praise."

"That be blowed! Your botheration poor management will 'ave us hall in the work'ouse."

"Oh, you're too big now. Besides, Tim, you've—you've got a moustache."

At last my Elsa was appreciated, and I had found what I wanted—a sympathetic Lohengrin.

THE MINOR CHORD

A Tale of the Middle West in the Early 70's

CHAPTER I

Something Akin to Soul Secrets

NOT long ago an obscure American girl, now it would seem as if I had nothing left to wish for, and yet how empty and unsatisfying success seems unless one can confide the dearest wishes of the heart's heart in retrospect.

In the zenith of my career as a prima donna, known in the foyers of every great city, the cynosure of the glow of the footlights, the plaudits of audiences in both hemispheres, the appreciative praise of great critics and the esteem and adoration of a host of admirers—I am alone with my memories.

Like the wife of Midas who, with her pretty Grecian mouth buried in the grass-roots, whispered the shameful secret "Midas has asses' ears," I must tell the story; and so I have begun a long-debated purpose, the recital of a tale of the Middle West in the early seventies.

My real life history has been too commonplace to appear romantic; my manager's version has over-gilded humble conditions which must never be revealed until my stage career is over. And so, in all my triumphs, though known everywhere, yet I am unknown, miserably unknown, except to those whom I have loved—and lost.

Full well I know that, like the Grecian queen, my confidence may be betrayed, my secret escape me. Even as the very grasses and lowly wildflowers whispered to the zephyrs, and the zephyrs carried it to the clematis and laurels until the whole vale was susurrant and murmuring with the sibilant refrain, "Midas has asses' ears," so any accident, the curiosity of a maid, yes, or the malignity of a rival, would make these avowals a reef on which to wreck my career, perhaps my reputation.

Men of genius in all ages have sought to dissect and analyze the heart of woman and to lay bare its mysteries in song and fiction, painting and sculpture; but the greatest men who weigh the emotions and hearts of their fellow-creatures as in a balance fail in the study of the feminine heart to enter its "holy of holies" and to carry away with them the secret key of a woman's soul.

We instinctively keep back from father, brother, lover and husband an inexpressible something from the cradle to the grave. However frank and generous a woman may be with the man she loves, she has likings, little ambitions, secret hopes and purposes, which, however innocent or praiseworthy, she shrinks from sharing with the other sex. My own strenuous and severely disciplined career has steeled me against the outward manifestation of the softer emotions and passions; but under the proud face and filmy breastknots of priceless lace they smoulder still, and often threaten to flash into fierce flame, when in the mirror of memory I catch the reflection of joys that have been, sorrows that smote, and injuries that

remain unatoned—and unforgiven. But these are only "wraiths of the sea-mists," and I must survey the panorama of the past. I must recall it.

So I have chosen this little book as my confidant. "And perhaps hereafter," as Virgil says by the lips of Æneas, "it will delight us to have remembered these things," or at worst, when my voice has become one of that supernal chorus, in the land where "beyond these partings there is peace," my critics, private and public, will be more lenient in their comments on poor Minza. Hush! how strangely the old, odd, love-name sounds.

Here I need make no apology for egotism. I know my own powers, although I may not appreciate my own weaknesses; but these petty considerations have little place in this personal communication between myself and my Maker. How trivial and infinitesimal they seem, when one comes before God and seeks the divine consolation.

How my manager would rave if he saw this book! He would probably suggest that I should cloister myself before I began to disclose

these soul-secrets. His theory of life is that every utterance should dazzle, startle and attract, and that a pure, homely, old-fashioned, honest Christian faith is hardly the thing for a successful operatic prima donna.

Thus I wrote but a few months ago, when I began this crude biography of a life.

CHAPTER II

Those Scenes of Childhood

I AM an American, and proud of my origin, although I cannot claim a classic birthplace, rich in historical associations. In fact, I believe my stage biographer has sadly, but innocently perhaps, deceived the public.

On the banks of what was twenty years ago a sluggish stream, in a miasmatic "fever-and-ague bottom" in the state of Iowa, I was born.

The old house was small, but neatly painted, and mother's rose trees and old-fashioned garden-borders gave it a charm that the newer and larger homestead that replaced it has never dissolved. Indeed, as I write, my first memories of that prosaic little village are still unbroken by time or change. The neighbors' houses, some more pretentious and others even more humble than our own; the village church, with its tall spire and ample horse sheds for the convenience of distant worshippers; the town hall, weather-beaten, but inspiring to my

The low, rolling hills opposite appeared as mountains to my childish fancy

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unsophisticated eyes, and the village stores, little hotel, grimy blacksmith shop and grain elevators—all were dignified factors of that "civilization and prosperity" of which the local paper and politicians discoursed so wisely and enthusiastically to the great and complacent satisfaction of the community. But more immediately within view of the narrow portals and windows of our home lay the greatest charm of my girlish surroundings. The familiar old grist mill, where farmers brought their wheat to grind, with its lazy water-wheel, and the dam which backed up the water of the creek making it a large shallow lake: this was to me in childhood as great as an ocean. The low rolling hills opposite appeared as mountains to my childish fancy; but in later years the landscape seems to have shrunken, and of the grove of oaks, maples and elms about the house, which we loved as if they were human beings—we christened each tree with pet names from our history lessons—only "old Napoleon," the walnut tree, remains now to mark the spot of childhood's loveliest and most restful retreat.

My dear father was a kindly, honest Englishman, who came to America to make his fortune. He married an American girl, proud-spirited and beautiful, accomplished in music, art and housekeeping and a true helpmeet in every sense of the word. They settled in the "Middle West" to "grow up with the country," which father loved as if he had been born upon its soil, and proved his sincerity by joining a fighting Iowa regiment, which won its laurels, with many casualties at Shiloh and the siege of Vicksburg, not to speak of many minor skirmishes. If father had a fault it was a large generosity that could not refuse aid or credit to a man in distress, and a weakness for accumulating land, for like his English ancestors, he desired a large estate rather than a great name or hoarded wealth. He was always lovable and loving, and loved us all, but mother was his queen, charming and splendid in his eyes to the end of life.

I was the first-born, and must have been a very troublesome baby, but mother used to say, "There's one virtue Minza possesses—she's never idle."

She left me alone one day while she went across the way to help a neighbor with a sick child, and the bread pan, which was standing by the stove full of dough, mixed and ready for kneading and baking, was too tempting for my budding artistic genius; and on her return she found the chairs, bureau, little old piano and "whatnot" lavishly sculptured with the dough. I shall never forget the expression on her face. I remember this incident, because it is my first memory of a man who was largely responsible in forming my career.

Old Dr. Waddington it was, who just then came in and saw my handiwork. He was a very portly man and the original founder of the village. In fact he had christened it "Smithville" in honor of his former home in the eastern states. American towns, as a rule, do not possess particularly expressive and characteristic names, for they grow and multiply so rapidly that it is rather difficult, as in the case of parents with a rapidly increasing family, to find names enough to go round.

He looked at me a minute, and said to mother: "I think she had better be brought

down tomorrow, as I have sent for Dr. Griffin to assist in the operation."

I remember the shudder mother gave, and how quickly she lifted me up and kissed me.

"Will it—what do you think—Doctor, is there any danger?"

"My dear Mrs. Maxwell, I cannot tell. The case is very puzzling, but I have great faith in Dr. Griffin, and we will warn you in time should dangerous symptoms suddenly develop."

Those were his words as nearly as I can remember. It was an anxious night, and father did not go to his business next morning, and when we started out he carried me in his arms, which I thought unusually kind of him. When danger threatens, how dearly parents love their children. He hugged me tightly, and mother carried wee baby Joe, as we went to the photographer's, and when we entered the dressing-room to prepare for the picture, mother burst into tears.

"O Robert, how can we permit it?"

The scene was like that of a funeral. I remember how the pretty little imitation stumps

and trees for the background amused me; the scenery was one of those primitive "scenic" settings that are to be found in nearly all photographers' galleries in the States.

The photographer was a long time preparing his plates, and shut himself up in his little dark room as if at his devotions. I was placed in front of the group, between father and mother. A forked iron rack was placed at the back of my head to hold me still. The little bald-headed photographer seemed to enjoy diving in and out from under the black cloth.

Finally the camera artillery was ready. The photographer, armed with a rattle-box to keep Baby Joe quiet, and with his watch in the other hand, the scorching sun pouring down upon the scenic effect through the white screens, took my first picture. My hair was combed back smoothly and held by an arched comb and tied with a blue ribbon. How clearly it all comes back to me now, as I look with misty eyes upon that old, faded tintype!

After the picture had been taken I was carried over to the little rickety, red office of Dr. Waddington. A tall be-spectacled man

wearing an apron was with him. He had a large number of small, bright knives, saws and sharp instruments spread out on the window-sill. There was a long narrow table in the center of the room. With the silent motion of an executioner, the strange man pointed to the table, and mother began to cry. Baby Joe joined in and father's eyes filled. He set me down gently. They all kissed me, including the stout old doctor, wheezing badly as his eyes glistened. I still felt mother's arms about me, and I was not afraid. It seemed a good deal of fuss to make over a little red-headed girl. A few minutes later I was unconscious. The test of life and death was being made, for the operation was to remove a dangerous growth in my throat—the throat and voice which have since won me fame and fortune. I have often thought how strange it was that I had no fear or apprehension, and that the real suffering was endured by those who loved me and watched my insensible form.

A general merchandise store, to which the farmers came every Saturday from miles around to obtain needed supplies in exchange for butter and eggs

CHAPTER III

Crushed by a Panic

THE operation was successful. My throat troubles disappeared, and at six years of age I was able not only to talk plainly, but even to sing as well, for mother's love of music could not endure that "her biggest girl" should grow up without being skilled in music and song. What happiness it brought. Father seemed more fond of me than ever, and he was never weary of fondling his "golden-haired Minza," whom the unregenerate neighbor's boys chose to irritate by calling her "little red-headed Meg."

Father was a country merchant and kept a general merchandise store, to which the farmers came every Saturday from miles around to obtain needed supplies in exchange for their butter and eggs and other produce. How well I remember that dear old place! The very odors of molasses, coffee and kerosene in such stores are today fragrant with memories of

childhood. Every factory or shop has its peculiar atmosphere, characteristic only of its particular branch of trade; but the old "store," as we called it, seemed to be a composite of everything.

As it was the largest "store" in the village, father and mother were considered the social and business leaders of the community. Our piano was a Steinway, the only one in the hamlet, and mother's playing and singing were noted far and near; indeed, she would often entertain the neighbors of an evening, for it was an important part of her religion to make others happy.

It was in those days that mother first began to instruct me in music. I loved it, and music was a part of my mother's very life. How well I remember awaking every morning as mother played Clayton's "Grand March" or Schumann's "Jolly Farmer" on the piano! Father rarely left home in the morning until mother had played them. He was not a musician, but loved music even more passionately than do some who are brilliant performers.

These were happy days; and as father used

to sit and smoke his pipe, with one baby on each knee and little red-headed Meg cosily stowed away between, listening to the music he loved so well, he looked the picture of family content. It was a happy family picture, but it is during the pleasant summer days of life that the storm of adversity often brings sudden ruin.

The United States is a country of climaxes. With immense new territory it develops more rapidly than its financial resources; consequently, its history is well punctuated with panics. It was during one of these panics that father failed in business; not through any fault of his own, but he had endorsed a note for a friend, who could not pay it, and father was compelled to stand the loss. Coming at a time when he had a large number of accounts outstanding and securities upon which he could not realize, father turned over to insistent creditors all his property, worth many times his liabilities, for them to prey upon and divide among them.

Never can I forget that night in June when he came home to tea, but could not eat. With

a deep, yearning gaze he looked across the table at mother, and burst into tears.

"Helen, I'm ruined!" he cried.

"How is that, Robert?" said mother quietly, going to him and placing her arms about his neck. This was her favorite way of asking questions. He told her the story in detail as simply as a little child.

"Still, it may not be so bad, after all, Robert. I will go down to the store with you after tea, and we will see."

Mother knew nothing of business matters, but was always firm in all emergencies. There was no further eating, and we went to the store. It was after closing hours, and the curtains had been drawn. Father's name blazed in large gilt letters seemed now like a mockery.

Once inside, we went to the high sloping desk, and there mother seemed to throw off her gentle, caressing tenderness, and to become the counsellor, champion and defender of her loved ones. The little, shrinking, timid woman seemed to become the guardian of the family. As I learned long afterward, father should have made an assignment to someone whom

"Well, Robert, it is cruel, it is wrong, but they will take the property"

he could trust for the benefit of all his creditors as soon as he was satisfied that he could not pay them all.

"Robert," said mother after a long silence, "it is cruel, it is wrong; they will take the property, but we can save our home; that is exempt."

"But, Helen, is that honest when—when—"

"Robert, your first duty is to yourself and family; you must not assume that all men are as honest as you. Robert, I say we will refuse to give up our home."

There was a queenly firmness in her tone and attitude; the light and fire in her eye was that of an aroused tigress defending her young.

So the home was saved by mother, but the lawyers soon made sad havoc of the property. The "assignee's sale" only realized, or rather was reported to have realized, a small fraction of its real value, and left father still a thousand dollars in debt.

"One thousand dollars!" I dreamed of them night after night. What an enormous sum it seemed! My poor father! His face grew thin and he began to stoop, and I would have

given my life to have secured that one thousand dollars. Could I sew? Could I grow big and go out teaching? But how long it would take to save one thousand dollars to lift the pall that hung over our household! I wished that I were a big girl and could marry a rich man.

But something must be done. Father, a few days ago the prosperous village merchant, had now but few friends who would help him.

He tried to find work as a carpenter—the trade he had learned in England; but no one would build houses during a financial panic, and finally, with a saw-buck on his shoulder, he went out to saw a neighbor's woodpile to buy flour for his family.

That cord of wood nearly cost father his life. It was a cold, rainy day, and as he worked in his shirtsleeves, and was not accustomed to manual labor, he caught a heavy cold. I had been with him to help pile up the wood as he sawed it. We had retreated behind a haystack from public view, for there was just a bit of pride left. How I hated everyone then! I believe I was an anarchist in spirit.

That night we sat alone without a light.

"Helen, what can we do, what can we do?" said father, with that beseeching look which expressed so much. His cough was growing worse.

"Something will come to us, Robert," replied mother. "Never mind, we shall live somehow. Be patient, Robert, be patient."

As is often the case, calamity had reversed the position of the two. Mother was now commander of the storm-beaten home craft.

She went to the piano and played softly;—impromptu chords as she used to play them on the little wheezy church organ, then "The Maiden's Prayer." Afterwards she started to sing the old melody, "When You and I Were Young." How sweet and soothing it was! No voice have I ever heard like mother's. In the middle of the third verse she stopped short.

"I declare I've forgotten the words, Robert."

She lighted a lamp to search among the pile of music on the top of the piano, and while doing so she found a worn piece of sheet music. It was Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," and she started.

"Robert, we're all right!"

The sight of that piece of music had brought to mind her wedding, and a wedding present.

"Robert, I have property."

"What can it be? You never told me."

"I never told you, my dear, but my father gave me a deed covering some wild land in the western part of the state as a wedding present. I have the deed in my possession."

"But you have never paid the taxes."

"I know—not for several years, and the land may not be worth much, but we shall see."

She sat down at once and wrote to a lawyer in the town nearest to the land. We all studied the map in my little school geography, but it gave us little idea of its value or location.

We waited anxiously for a reply. The lawyer gave a most discouraging report of the land, saying that it was fifty miles from a railroad, and that it had been sold for taxes; to redeem it and secure a clear title would require a large amount of money. The panic had also affected that section very much, but possibly he might clear three hundred dollars if power of attorney were given him to sell at once.

A family consultation was held over our

frugal meal that night. Winter was coming on. Something must be done, and quickly!

Three hundred dollars! That was a large sum of money.

"We should accept it, Robert," said mother after long reflection.

That settled it.

"My plan is to re-invest that money in a music and book shop here in the village, and I will teach music in order to sell the instruments. That is what we must do, Robert."

"My dear Helen, with your babies and you so delicate in health, and—"

"Never mind, dear, we shall manage somehow; you and Meg can attend to the store and the household work, and I will teach."

My mother's wedding present was sold. The land proved, ten years after, to be coal land worth nearly half a million dollars when the railroad reached it, and it made the fortunes of several men. But that three hundred dollars invested in a stock of violins, guitars, strings, trimmings, sheet music and books was another link in the chain of events which determined my career.

CHAPTER IV

First Impulse of a Public Career

WE were soon established in business. Our music and book shop was on one side of the room occupied by the village post-office. Mother organized a music class, and, although the income was small, through the commission on the sale of an occasional piano or a violin to a country dance fiddler and "caller," we managed to live.

But we were poor; that thousand dollars still remained unpaid; and father's creditors even tried to seize the little business which gave us a livelihood. However, mother was too shrewd for them. She had established the firm with herself as principal, and this baffled the creditors; but it worried poor father as being dishonest, and his health began to fail. The dumb ague fastened its grip upon him, and every other day he had a "shake" or chill. While mother was out teaching he was at home doing the housework, washing, ironing, cooking,

and tending Joe; while baby Jimmy was with me at the little store, sleeping in the perambulator behind the counter. It was confinement to the house that told on father. Men were not made for housekeepers.

When music and selling musical instruments became our means of livelihood, I began to hate it. Why should my mother have to earn her living that way? Other girls did not need to play fiddles and amuse country bumpkins in order to make a few pennies. Other girls had pretty things to wear. My mother's bonnets and dresses were made over for me. I grew to hate music, so much so that mother found it difficult to teach me the rudiments. Oh, the long, dreary five-finger exercises and scales! I was so proud when she permitted me to play the little "Bee March." That seemed more like real music. She looked after me carefully and would not allow me to sing in school, even though I pleaded; but with a mother's intuition she realized how important it was to train the voice from childhood, and today I do not believe that my natural voice was originally at all extraordinary. Mother's

care, however, gave me the strength to endure the severe discipline of after years.

For some years mother had given her services as organist in the little country church, towards the construction of which father had contributed one thousand dollars. I confess, as I sat in the choir, just behind the dear old minister, Sunday after Sunday, I often thought I would like to tear out that thousand dollars from those dingy walls. But to me that dear old church has tender recollections; a tall, slender spire, adorned by a lightning rod; green blinds about the square cupola, from which the rich tones of the bell resounded; the old gray-haired sexton, who permitted me to hold the rope while it raised me toward the roof; the small class-room just off the main entrance; on the other side the stairs to the gallery, where we children used to play when the "mite socials" were held. The cheerful savor of coffee, of oyster stews and sandwiches comes back to me now. The interior was painted a light brown. The windows, in imitation of old Norman arches, had eyebrow curves of a deeper brown just above. The

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home"

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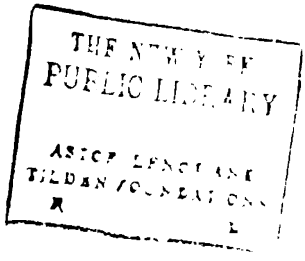

pews were plain, and the old and deaf people of the congregation used to occupy those in front, while the tittering and sniggering youngsters clustered in the rear. It was on a hot Communion Sunday in June that the first link in my musical career was forged. All strangers were exhorted to join in this service. Father and mother were kneeling, and I was left at the organ to sing a verse each time, as the people came forward and knelt about the pulpit platform.

Alone I sang—

"Just as I am without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come."

When I saw father and mother kneeling together at that altar, and remembered that they had never attended a class or prayer meeting, or had family prayers at home, it thrilled me. Up to this time I had refused to kneel at the mourner's bench.

The last "I come" was fading away, and I was almost unconscious of the presence of others. I opened my eyes suddenly and saw

two blue eyes raised above the altar rail, which met mine. I started and gasped aloud. The minister turned about quickly and looked over his spectacles; the service stopped. Mother and father started toward me, thinking I was ill. I blushed a deep red, made deeper by the sunshine pouring through the stained-glass windows. I had made a scene in church.

The owner of the blue eyes was a stranger. He was evidently a commercial traveler, and was staying at Francis' Hotel. I was only a homely little red-headed girl, and it was rather unusual for me to attract an admiring glance.

I confess I fell in love, for those blue eyes fascinated me. Of course it was silly in a girl of tender years, but there was a certain affinity in that glance that I cannot explain. I did not become acquainted with the stranger that day, but found later that he came from the great city of Boston, on the distant Atlantic shore.

The church music of the period was rather peculiar. Mother loved a solemn, rich harmony that expressed reverence and adoration, such as is used in the English church service; but

in every church, in every society, religious or civic, whether great or small, there is sure to be a quarrel among musical rivals at one time or another.

Mother's taste was questioned by some of the ladies whom she had been teaching. The popular gospel hymns, with their "arrangement" of popular vocal and dance music, had turned their heads.

"They be so truly passionate," wailed old spinster Brown, "and express real, great music," she continued, wringing her hands.

It was a tempest in a teapot, to be sure. Mother was firm and would tolerate no nonsense. The kind old minister sided with her, but the majority of the congregation followed Squire Green, the leading trustee, who had become wealthy by foreclosing mortgages on poor people, and whose prayers in class meeting reminded me of an angry bull.

To me the Squire was a hypocrite.

The final result was that mother was asked to resign her thankless task, and we walked out of the church the following Sunday—banished from the church my father had helped to build;

a church that held in its walls enough to relieve him from debt; a church to which he had given time and money in prosperity—but from which he was driven out in adversity.

In spite of this galling incident, I thank heaven I have never lost a pure and simple faith in God.

"Well, the kingdom of God is big enough for us a.," said mother, as we sat down to dinner that day.

For a time after the crushing affair at the church, we thought of leaving the town altogether, but mother insisted:

"No, we will yet see the turn of the tide."

It did not take long, either.

The shop business was poor, though mother's energy had made her successful as a teacher; but success always brings its penalty in the way of jealousy and envy. It was thought she was using her position as organist in church to secure more scholars; but they drew closer to her with unswerving loyalty, and the class kept on increasing until she was threatened with nervous breakdown.

Father insisted that he would starve rather

than permit her to continue without a rest, and a family consultation was held, at which he suggested a concert to close the term—something that would be a substitute for the Sunday-school concerts which had been given at the church, under mother's direction, once every month.

The new organist at the church had tried the concerts and failed. Then mother commenced planning for the recital. It was very elaborate in conception, considering the material with which she had to deal, and from this first recital I drifted into a stage career.

The Town Hall was generously offered to her; a temporary stage was built, and bed linen was brought into requisition for curtains.

How I dreaded the humiliation of that first concert! My mother and father in the show business! It stung my pride. The rehearsals proceeded, and mother concentrated every energy upon the preparations. She understood human nature, which was indicated impressively by the manner in which she assigned the various parts to those best fitted to fill them. For hours and hours I was trained to

sing Leonora's arias from Verdi's "Trovatore." I was locked in a room to practice the violin, for I was to furnish the violin solos and surprise the public with the unsuspected ability and taste of "little Minza Maxwell." Oh, how heartsick I was as the date approached! Could it not be postponed? Could I hide? There was only one thing that held me close to duty—the stubborn courage and hot, enduring determination that doesn't care for odds or discouragements. If my mother *was* in the "show business," and if my father *did* attend to the babies and wash dishes, the Sunday-school concert should be outdone by our efforts.

And so I made my real *debut* in an amateur concert, amid the taunts of old playmates who lived in the "terrace."

Mother asked me to try on a new coat with shining buttons

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CHAPTER V

First Conquest on the Stage

IT was a few days past my tenth birthday when the recital was given at the Town Hall. Father stood at the door taking the money—the straggling silver quarters—for admission. I had shrunk out of sight from some of my schoolgirl chums, who, I was afraid, would jeer at me.

There was not a very large attendance, but Squire Green's family and the Blixons and all our enemies in the church quarrel turned out in full force. I fancied I saw knives and daggers under their skirts. My ire was roused, and I would not fail before that envious audience.

Cool and collected behind those improvised curtains, which revealed to the audience pantomimic silhouettes of the performers, stood mother. Clad in a simple muslin dress, lowered just a trifle at the neck, with flowers at her throat and in her hair, it seemed to me that I had never before seen her look so beautiful.

Her dark blue eyes were flashing with excitement. Two gawky country boys stood at either side of the center curtains to draw them apart.

There was a moment of breathless suspense just before mother gave the signal. Some young lads, who were admitted free as ushers, were stationed in different parts of the room. They turned down the lamps at a signal. The red lights were turned on by father, and then in the hushed darkness, with a cardboard moon rising slowly over a scene representing an old plantation, the soft strains of "Suwanee River" were sung without instrumental accompaniment by the chorus behind the scenery.

The effect was charming. Mother's clear, beautiful voice led the chorus of boys and girls. It was something unexpected—and that usually pleases an American audience.

The last strains of Foster's plaintive melody had scarcely died away when, promptly at the tap of the bell, two of mother's advanced pupils rendered the piano duet "Poet and Peasant," while mother stood over them to turn the music and count the time in a soft undertone. The overture to "William Tell"

followed, in four hands. It seems to me that no orchestration ever rendered a more finished conception than those simple duets.

My heart fluttered when the *accelerando* of the last measures in that duet were reached and the crashing chords were struck, the old Rossini method of concluding an overture. I was next on the program, and for the last time gently touched the strings to see if my violin were in tune. The sea of faces and the light before me was confusing. Not a feature did I recognize.

"Keep cool and go slowly," whispered mother, as she played the introduction to Mendelssohn's "Consolation."

As I drew the bow for the first notes my fingers seemed to give every note a wavering sound. After the first full down bow, I felt the influence of mother's approval, forgot those in front, and half closed my eyes. It was a simple piece and I was at my best. As I bowed and walked off there was scarcely a ripple of applause, and I felt crushed as I walked behind the sheet curtain. Mother rushed in and kissed me tenderly.

"O my darling little Meg! It was so beautiful!" She kissed me over and over again, and the program stopped for a moment. What a light heart those kisses gave me! I had pleased mother, and it was she for whom I played.

The next number was "The Storm," which, with its vivid mimicry and Alpine song, mother played on the piano, and it created a wild outburst of applause. It was just the thing to suit a country audience.

"By jinks, I thought the rain war a-comin' on the roof!" whispered a lank farmhand. Mother had captured the audience. My next piece was a vocal solo, the aria "Ah! I Have Sighed to Rest Me!" from "Trovatore." Mother had arranged an impromptu orchestra. The bald-headed cornetist and country-dance fiddler, Jack Robins, were playing their parts more by ear than by note. The bass viol made several mistakes, but hastily corrected himself. The aria started out well. I felt that responsive approval from in front, but in the second part, in the tensest passage, the confused cornetist came in on the wrong measure, and the mistake quite upset the entire orchestra. The

clarinet squeaked, the bass drum lost his place, and it ended in a crash—a break-down! I caught mother's flashing eye. There was a titter about the room. Quickly mother motioned the orchestra to cease, and repeating on the piano the introduction she said quietly:

"Begin over again."

I did so—only mother and I. The failure nerved me with stronger power. The song was finished, and the applause was deafening, the audience appreciating mother's courage more than they did the song. We were encored several times.

Squire Green and his wife arose and left just then, as if to humiliate father at the door.

The concert concluded in a blaze of triumph with the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's "Messiah."

After the program parents came forward for their little girls who had taken part and mother was overwhelmed with congratulations. Mother had vanquished her rivals, and the Sunday-school concerts were laid low.

It was the old Squire who remarked a few days afterwards:

"Wal, I told you that woman was a-leadin' our church into theatrical temptations. See that concert—a disgrace, sir! Full of jig songs and operas that are played in theaters. No, sir, keep our sanctuary pure."

"Robert, I am proud of Meg," mother said when we reached home.

"My own little sunbeam!" ejaculated father, taking me on his knee.

The evening's events were discussed until past midnight in the dark around the old "base-burner." Even after we retired, I heard mother and father still talking it over. Baby Jim snuggled closer to me in bed. It all seemed like a dream, and the echoes of the music rang in my ears.

"Fred Burroughes was there tonight," said father softly. I had not seen him.

After this concert the reputation of mother as a music teacher was established, and by the home newspaper she was proclaimed "the musical leader of the city."

CHAPTER VI

The Breaking of Home Ties

FATHER'S health did not improve, and old Dr. Waddington shook his head and said "Get out of this ague district." This required money, and the thousand-dollar debt seemed more burdensome than ever. Mother struggled on with her lessons.

"One—two—three—four; one — two —three —four." I can see her yet in the old parlor at the side of a scholar, going through her daily program of drudgery.

One cool October day at noon I was near the old brick schoolhouse, standing under the tall cottonwood trees. The children were playing in the rustling bed of fallen leaves. The air was laden with shouts of childish merriment, with now and then an unearthly Indian yell: children without noise are not children. It was one of those perfect autumn days which live in memory almost as vividly as the events which have become notable in our lives.

From across the road came a form I knew well, although I had never spoken to him.

"This is Minza Maxwell, I know," said he warmly.

"Yes, sir," I replied, walking apart from the others.

"Well, Minza, I want you to become a great singer."

It was rather abrupt.

"What am I to do?" I asked, hardly daring to look up into his face.

"Your father is going to Boston with me on business, and will be gone three months. You are to go with him and study music."

It seems that it had all been arranged at home, and was no news to them when I arrived. Father was being sent away for his health by brothers of a secret fraternity, and I was to look after him. Mr. Burroughes had also arranged for my music lessons in Boston.

It was the first home-breaking of a little family. Like Cinderella, I had dreamed of a handsome, princely lover to pay that thousand dollar debt. My first hero was Fred Burroughes. Although I was but a child while he was a grown

man, gratitude filled my heart with the deepest adoration for the blue-eyed commercial traveler whom I had first seen over the altar-rail at communion service in the little brown church.

I had a loving girl companion. Angela Gooding lived across the road, and a pretty little thing she was. True, we had our quarrels when out berrying or picking up hickory nuts, or playing in the sandpile under the old maples, or swinging in the cherry trees near the old red barn. Nevertheless we were devoted chums. Our secrets were mutual. We make our truest friends in childhood, because a child makes friends from disinterested motives.

The night before I was to leave for Boston, Angela and I wandered down to the old deserted limekiln, where we had spent so many happy days together, and built fairy castles in the air. I said good-bye and kissed even the large flat stones where we used to sit and study the stars, or watch the rays of the afternoon sun playing through the leaves of the old walnut tree.

We cried because we thought that perhaps

we should never be together again. We plighted our eternal friendship with rings made of withered blades of grass. The hidden hemp fish-poles were brought out and put away again, and over the wire fence Farmer Brown's muley cow "Spotty" looked pensively, as if she, too, wanted a good-bye kiss.

In the house I threw off my jacket and cried as mother asked me to try on a new coat with shining buttons. In our need mother had made my jackets out of father's faded and worn-out coats, and dyed them in logwood. The black persisted in wearing off on my neck, and the boys used to plague me with cries of "Charcoal Meg." How I despised that name! But Angela never teased.

"Mamma, let me stay, and you go with papa," I remember pleading.

"No, a little girl of ten could hardly do my work," softly said mamma. "You go with papa and study hard, and then you will be a great singer some day and not have to endure poverty. Be brave, Minza!"

She kissed me again. She was not an effusive mother; her kisses were few, but always

appropriate. She did not humor me by waiting on my every wish or tucking me in bed, with the other usual incidents of expressing a mother's love, but taught me self-reliance and inspired me with an ambition that I could not stifle.

The next day was a busy one—what with packing the trunks and many farewells. The train left at midnight. We tried to spend a cheerful evening, and Angela was allowed to stay up with me. The hour of twelve seemed to come too quickly. The 'bus rattled to the door with its dingy light in front. Once more I broke out, "I will not go. Mamma—mamma, I cannot leave you and the babies."

"Come, Minza, dear, mamma will be all right. That's a good girl, take care of papa and be brave, Minza, be brave and work hard." She kissed me good-bye as only a mother can. Father hugged me close to him. We were off to Boston. It seemed like an exile to Siberia.

CHAPTER VII

On to Boston

OUR journey was before the advent of through train service such as we have in these days. One had to change roads often, cars oftener, with endlessly long waits for connections. At one junction I read all the placards several times sideways and upside down.

When we reached Chicago all was bustle. The trip already seemed to put new life into father. An ague chill was due that day, but it did not come, and never another pill was taken.

The cable cars, gliding along without any horses or engines, were the first things to attract my attention. The waters of Lake Michigan were dancing in the morning sunlight. The tall factory chimneys and business blocks were to me awe-inspiring, and the trains darting along the lake front, with their wide-funnel smoke stacks, seemed like busy messengers from another world.

On to Boston we journeyed. We could not afford sleeping cars, and father arranged a bed for me on the seats, but did not sleep himself. The nearer we approached to Boston, the straighter the people sat in their seats; and the beautiful suburban highways and streets gave us glimpses of neatly-kept cottages, stately mansions and stone-walled lawns and orchards.

The picturesque, crooked streets of Boston had for us, as for all Americans, a peculiar fascination. They are among the few evidences left of the early European settlement of America. The historic old Boston common, with its towering elms, brought before me visions of the Revolutionary War, which I had studied in my school history.

We crossed the Charles River Bridge to Cambridge, passed the old Washington elm and Longfellow's beautiful home, buried in the trees, and stopped at a low, narrow gray house with a green door and an enormous brass knocker, which was to me quite an object of curiosity.

A tall, kindly-looking lady with a long face,

which to my childish fancy recalled our old horse at home, came to the door.

"Miss Paxton, I believe?" said my father.

"Yes, sir, and this is Mr. Maxwell? And is this Minza? Come here, my dear."

She was a prim maiden lady and was kind to me, yet she was not my mother. Only a mother can win a child at once.

"So this is Helen's only daughter," she said, untying the strings of my hood, "and she—"

"Oh, you know mamma!" I broke in. Even an association of acquaintance inspires confidence, and I came closer to her.

"Yes, my dear, I knew your mamma when she was a little girl like you."

"It was hard for Helen to part with her," said father, "but she has great hopes for Minza."

"Of course," said Miss Paxton heartily.

"And now," said father, "I must be going. Minza, be a good girl and mind Miss Paxton. Good-bye, dear."

He kissed me tenderly, and I broke out in rebellion. "I will not stay! Mamma said I was to go with you."

"But I shall come back, dear."

Again I had a good cry; it seemed as if all the world were against me. An exile from home—alone with strangers! For the first few days I was very lonely indeed. I made up my mind, however, to be brave and diligent, and the hope of doing something to help my dear father strengthened and comforted me.

A few days later, I began my lessons. Professor Windemere was a big, benign man with long whiskers. I soon learned to admire him, although he never considered me a promising pupil. He was a prudent teacher, and conducted my vocal exercises with unwearied care. How tiresome and dreary it was, going up and down those scales. Often I would stop my practicing and cry as I thought of mother and the babies at home! I even envied the little girls in the streets selling papers and matches! They were free, with no scales to practice. I was not permitted to sing tunes, although my heart was hungry for melody. Miss Paxton's keen but kind eye seemed upon me night and day. As the days wore on I became more reconciled, but my thoughts were always away

in that little Western town. We feel more at home as we become acquainted with the landscape, and when the old street-car conductor with spectacles called me by my Christian name one day, I felt that I knew nearly everyone in Boston. Then I began to take an interest in the people, for Miss Paxton took me to church and to Sabbath school, where I met some nice girls, who dwelt near Miss Paxton. They came for me to accompany them to the coasting hills and skating ponds in the winter, and my Western life had at least made me a fearless and expert, if not a graceful, coaster and skater. This made me a leader in matters requiring nerve and self-assertion, and more than one rude boy was glad to cease from annoying any member of "that Minza Maxwell gang" after his first encounter with its leader. On the other hand my new friends taught me how to do more gracefully the things that I had already learned to do well, and gave me little dainty articles of wear and use that did much to instil a greater love of the artistic.

My great friend was Mary Howe, a motherless girl some two or three years older than

myself, born in Cambridge and living in the family of an elder brother. She was very fond of reading and especially fascinated with stories of Colonial and Revolutionary days. Our friendship was greatly accentuated by a little adventure just a day or two before Christmas.

"See what my dear father sent me from Milwaukee," she said as she finished putting on her skates and watched me buckle the last strap of my own, "isn't it a beauty?" And she held up a pretty little silver chain purse, through which I caught a gleam of gold.

An evil-faced, undersized man swept by, snatched the pretty purse and dashed away for the opposite shore.

"Pickpocket! Stop thief!" yelled several boys and girls, and as the cry spread up the shore a mob of men, girls and boys in a semi-circular ring swept down after the fugitive.

I sprang to my feet and dashed off in hot pursuit, trending a little to the right of the thief, who I saw intended to land at a point where he could easily hide himself among trees and buildings. I was a little the swifter skater and my course was shorter than his, but the

day before a weak place in the ice had been marked "Dangerous" by the police.

The thief laughed as he saw me gain upon him, but kept his face shadowed by his cloth cap and one hand. "You're crazy," he cried. "Go home, cry-baby," for between anger and sorrow for poor Mary the tears were running down my face. I struck out faster and a moment later was crossing near the black water of the spring hole. The thin, tough ice bent and buckled, the still water broke into glancing ripples, but the ice held and I was close at the man's heels as he was making his last stroke toward the snow-covered shore. I gathered myself for one desperate leap, as I had often done in trying to make "the longest jump" on the old mill pond, and landed on the back of the fugitive.

He went down with a sprawl, a thud, and an explosive groan that seemed to drive every breath of air from his body, and I rolled quickly to one side, snatching the precious purse, which he had carried all the time in his right hand or concealed in his sleeve.

I started up, but there was no need of haste,

for the thief was dazed and breathless, and the crowd, led by a great, fair-haired giant, had reached the spot.

"Are you all right, little one?" he said, as he picked me up as if I were a baby, wiping the tears and a little grit and blood from my face, for I had been just a little hurt by the fall. "There, you're all right, and the bravest little girl I ever saw. Here's your chum, crying, too, like you—after leading us all after 'Slimmie' here, who will have plenty of time to rest up before he goes skating again."

Then he took our names and addresses, and said we would be summoned as witnesses soon. "Slimmie" was carted off in a black-covered wagon, and I was praised and crowded about until Mary and I were glad to leave the skaters and go home.

A few days later we were called into court and told our story of the theft, and the judge gave "Slimmie" a long sentence, although he had counsel, and evidently was backed up by staunch comrades. As he was led by us after being sentenced, he gazed at me with a cold and evil gleam in his eyes that made me think

of a rattlesnake whose deadly fangs I had barely escaped back in Iowa. "I shall remember Minza Maxwell," he said under his breath. It was more like a hiss than a whisper, sibilant, threatening, merciless, and I drew back shuddering.

"Don't mind him, girlie," said an old man behind me. "He's dangerous and treacherous enough, but I'll fix the gang for you," and the detective, for it was he, followed the prisoner's lawyer out into the corridor. When we came out a few moments later the lawyer himself raised his hat and said:

"None of 'Slimmie's' pals will hurt you, Miss Maxwell, for your very brave and spirited act, nor will 'Slimmie' have any countenance hereafter unless he pledges himself 'to take his medicine like a man,' as they say. Good-day and good luck to you."

Of course the papers told the story, and the copies I sent home raised quite a *furore* in Smithville. Mary's friends never tired of inviting me to tea and little amusements, and Mary and I were inseparable A little after New Year's she came down to Miss Paxton's

one night strangely jubilant, and almost dancing and singing. Could this be my loving but somewhat staid Mary?

"Don't look so astonished, puss," she cried merrily, "see what father has sent you for a New Year's gift." I opened the dainty carton; it held another purse just like Mary's, and in it were two bright gold half eagles. "See what is on the clasp," she cried, and in delicate script I read my own initials and after them "To a Brave Girl. Always be Brave."

"It's very pretty and well deserved, my dear," said prim Miss Paxton as she took charge of the gift and we turned to go "over to Mary's." "But don't forget the motto and be brave all your life, like your dear mother." I mentally determined to follow her counsel.

That winter I was at times very homesick, but still had many pleasures. With Mary I visited the great museums and libraries of Cambridge and Boston, heard some notable preachers and orators address gatherings in which children took a leading part, and indeed had all the relaxation consistent with close study of my music curriculum. My voice

grew fuller and my notes better sustained; and father had for some time been at home and much improved in health.

As the spring advanced we found new pleasures, in which even Miss Paxton sometimes joined. She took us on April 19 to Lexington Green, where Captain Parker's militia company met "according to law" to muster and drill and were fired upon by Major Pitcairn's British infantry, killing and wounding many. Miss Paxton was descended from common ancestors of some of the victims, and showed us the house to which Jonathan Harrington dragged himself when dying, under the eyes of his broken-hearted family. Then we went on to Concord, and saw the relics in the museum there; the North Bridge, where first the British invader fell back before the fire of the Massachusetts riflemen; the Old Manse, where Hawthorne lived and wrote; and the ancient graveyards, where many a veteran, patriot and scholar, with Emerson, Alcott, Thoreau, and other great Americans, lie buried. Then we took tea in the little tavern where on the day of the "Concord fight" Colonel Barrett

held his little council of war in the gray morning and Colonel Smith and Major Pitcairn drank their toddy and gave orders for the pillage of the American munitions and later for a hasty retreat.

On the way back Miss Paxton showed us where the Americans ambushed and fired upon the retreating British; where Pitcairn's men, out of breath and fearful, rested when Lord Percy's infantry and cannon opened on the gathering clouds of sharpshooters; and where, despairing of reaching Boston by land, over Boston Neck, where Dover Street now is, the English turned off on the Charlestown road, glad to cross the narrow causeway and turn at bay at its head.

Then we visited Charlestown on the seventeenth of June and climbed the narrow-circled stone steps of Bunker Hill monument to look out over the Navy Yard, where General Howe marshalled his battalion, the narrow river where Admiral Groves' warships bombarded Prescott's little redoubt, and Copp's Hill burying ground, whence General Gage viewed the defeated carnage and retreat of his veterans. Now the

homes of over a million people, with their factories and mills, lay in a great circle around us, pierced yet united by hundreds of steam and trolley car tracks, while to seaward stretched the haven, dotted with islands and alive with steamships, yachts and sailing vessels, and beyond the outer forts and isolated lighthouses and beacons the broad Atlantic, the boundless sea.

It was not a favorable day in which to visit the monument, for the whole enclosure was thronged with sightseers, and we had to make way for others, but that view of the theater of one of the most important battles of the Revolution and of Greater Boston and its surroundings I have never forgotten.

I enjoyed one of those vivid dreams of the imagination peculiar to the verging of youth upon manhood and womanhood, which I am convinced are far more spirituelle, enthralling and illuminant than any that most of us enjoy in after life. Certainly Mary Howe rallied me on my absent-mindedness, and Miss Paxton was worried lest I should make a false step in our descent to the street.

The summer, too, had its pleasures. One of the most vivid in my recollection was the great display of fireworks on the evening of Independence Day; and another glorious day was spent in a trip by steamer to Nahant; and yet so strong were my home ties that I could never wholly overcome my homesickness.

But my banishment was suddenly ended, and one morning about a year after my coming to Boston, I came down to breakfast and found Miss Paxton crying. A canary in the bay window was singing gaily in the morning sunlight, as if trying to dispel her grief.

On the table was that yellow envelope which to quiet folk augurs ill. In it was a telegram.

"My dear, you will have to go home—today."

"What's the matter? Is mamma—"

"No, no, my child, but your mother wants you at home."

"My papa—"

"He has gone home, and is much better."

This did not dispel my forebodings. At noon Fred Burroughes arrived, and I returned with him. My mind was so absorbed with fears of something wrong that I quite forgot my com-

panion; indeed, I remember very little of the return journey—I don't even remember bidding dear Miss Paxton good-bye. The train never seemed to go fast enough.

At length we neared Smithville. When the train whistled, how my heart leaped, and as the train rattled across the old railway bridge my face was pressed against the car window, as the lights in the village twinkled a welcome. Our house was at the end of the street, and I saw a light in the window glimmering like a light-house in a harbor. I fancied a death-bed scene; my eyes were filled with tears. Out of the "bus" I jumped and burst in at the door.

"Mother, mother!" I cried. She was not there. Could it be? My father grasped and kissed me.

"Mother, mother!" I again cried wildly.

"Here, Minza," cried a weak, familiar voice in another room.

I hurried thither and smothered that pale, wan face with kisses.

"Another brother, Minza," said father, and there in the dim light I saw the little face with eyes closed on the other side of the bed.

"Mother, mother," I cried, "another brother?" Father had tea ready, but I could not eat till I had wakened little Joe and Jim, who were sleeping together in a cot.

CHAPTER VIII

The Old Home Saved

THE next morning I spent in going all about the dear old house to see that everything was there. Little Joe and Jim were always with me, and I was happy. Mother asked me to sing, and when I finished she called me in to kiss me.

"I am so happy, Minza, and wanted to see my little girl so badly."

"I'll never go back, mother, never!"

It seemed that there had been some fears of her dying a few days before, and they had telegraphed for me; but that morning good, fat old Dr. Waddington came in, gave me a good hug and kiss, and his cheery voice soon assured me that all was well with mother.

"You see, I've brought you another brother, Minza, and he's a singer, too."

The next few days were full of quiet happiness. With Angela I visited all our old haunts, the millpond and the creek and the

ruined limekiln, in whose shelter she tried to tell me all that had happened in Smithville in a year. How kind everyone seemed—all glad to see me, so they said. Even Squire Green stopped and shook hands with me.

When I returned to the house I found Mr. Burroughes. I had quite forgotten him in my happiness at getting home.

"Now, just one song, Minza," he begged. "I must be off by the 7.40 train."

I sang for him with all my heart. He came up and kissed me; his blue eyes seemed to look deep into my heart. It is not often that a girl hardly in her teens falls in love with a man of twenty-nine. He was my *beau ideal*, and I did not know until years after that his sacrifices made possible my first musical instruction in Boston.

It was not long before the old cloud of care and indebtedness engulfed us again.

The book and music shop had not been very profitable during my absence. Mother's illness had stopped the revenue from teaching. Father, however, seemed as sanguine as in our most prosperous days.

"We must be thankful," he said, "that mother is spared to us."

It was the following week that the thunderclap fell. Father's illness had rather thrown him out of the way of doing business, and to bridge over present and pressing difficulties he had borrowed three hundred dollars and mortgaged our home, expecting that the sale of our two horses would cover it. But this morning father's uncle, William Gordon, arrived from England. He was a red-faced man with bonnet-string whiskers. His face and nose were frescoed with that purple tracery which bespeaks a liberal indulgence in beef and beer. He had thin lips, and somehow I felt that his visit foreboded no good.

"I had forgotten that hundred and fifty dollars entirely, Uncle William," I heard father say to him.

"Ah, but I 'adn't, me boy. So I came to see about it directly."

"But I don't know how I can pay it now."

"Ah! but ye 'avn't tried to pay it, and I 'old a mortgage on those horses and must 'ave 'em."

"That be blowed! Your botheration poor management will 'ave us hall in the work'ouse"

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He was to take old Tom and Fan and sell them at auction to pay the principal and interest. Father remonstrated with him in vain, for a sale at this time meant a sacrifice of half their real value.

"But, uncle," continued father, "I must pay the mortgage on my house first."

"That be blowed! Your botheration poor management will 'ave us all in the work'ouse. I must 'ave the 'orses directly. You're goin' to slip 'em from me, but I 'old a mortgage."

He demanded his last pound of flesh.

In the morning we saw him take old Tom and Fan out of the barn, and lead them away down the lane. We all cried and hugged the old horses who had been almost a part of the family.

"My God! All is lost," moaned father. "How can I pay the mortgage now?"

"It will come out all right, Robert," said mother, who was sitting up for the first time; "don't worry."

But father had forgotten that the mortgage was so soon due, and that very week a foreclosure notice was served upon him and

published in the village newspaper, announcing that our home was to be sold at sheriff's sale in seven weeks. Oh, the disgrace of seeing that notice in the paper!

Instead of mending, matters became worse. Father tried to sell the music business, but there were no buyers; mother offered her piano, but no one had money just then; and our home was to be sacrificed under the sheriff's hammer. The sale was to be held on Monday, and on Sunday I went to church with gloomy feelings. Just as I was entering I met Tim Rathbone, who walked along with me. Tim had no sisters, and he always called me "Sister Minza."

"You're not stuck-up if you *have* been to Boston, are you, Minza?" he demanded.

"No, Tim," I answered, wretchedly; "oh, I'm so miserable."

"What's up?" he asked quickly.

"Our home is to be sold tomorrow, and I—don't—" I burst out crying.

"Go to the bank and borrow money like my dad," Tim advised, with his hands in his pockets.

"Yes, but they won't give it to me."

"She wants three hundred dollars to pay that mortgage what's being sold today at her home"

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"I'll go with you," he asserted.

Tim's words comforted, although they did not reassure.

The sermon that day was on the text "Take no thought for the morrow." The anthem followed, and its reiterated words, "Without money—without—without—with—out mon—ey and without—without—price," rolled over and over on the singers' tongues. What a mockery!

Father was unmanned; mother was still feeble and ill.

The next morning Tim and I were at the bank door long before it opened. Mr. Laneson, the cashier, came up to us and asked kindly:

"Well, what's wanted, my little ones?"

"She wants three hundred dollars," spoke up Tim with a businesslike air, "to pay on that mortgage what's being sold today at her house."

"What security have you?" asked the amused cashier.

"Myself," I spoke up. "Don't you think I'm worth three hundred dollars?"

"Well, well," smiled the now interested

official, "but you see, my dear, that's not collateral and won't pay interest. You do not understand these things, my little girl."

"But I must have the money, sir," I sobbed. "I will sell anything, even my voice—only—"

"Well now, let's see about this," said Mr. Laneson, turning to a clerk who seemed to understand all the circumstances. Mr. Laneson took two piles of bank notes from the counter, put a slip on the big hook and followed me.

The sale was at ten o'clock that morning. The sheriff was there with a crowd of curious villagers, few of whom were bidders—rather they came like "keeners" at a funeral. The sheriff was about to raise his hammer and begin the sale when Mr. Laneson whispered in his ear.

Suddenly the sheriff dropped his hammer. "Cut off my fees, too," he said in a loud voice. "she's a plucky gal, she is."

The sale halted.

I went home, and when father learned that he still had time to pay up the mortgage and that Tim and I had saved the day, he broke down completely.

He caught me to his breast. "How can I ever repay you, my little daughter?"

"Father," I said, "I should never have thought of it but for Tim."

Mother's lips were trembling and her loving eyes moist with repressed tears, but women, I think, and especially mothers, mingle in their lives so much of joy and sorrow that they bear either success or loss better than most men. At least it was so with mother, for she laid her cool hands on father's forehead and loosened his necktie and collar, and brought him a glass of cold water just drawn from the old well.

"Drink this, Robert, dear, and be calm. Minza is a darling girl and a loving daughter, but let us thank God who put it into the hearts of strangers to be kinder and more generous than our own flesh and blood. Now we must go to work again and plan how to pay good Mr. Laneson his three hundred dollars; but the first thing to do is to get a good dinner and celebrate our deliverance."

And this dear, thoughtful little mother bustled about, making biscuit, frying ham and eggs, and brewing coffee, until father had

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quite recovered his good spirits and enjoyed our little banquet almost as much as Joe and Jimmy, who were quite jubilant over the unexpected feast.

"I wish Tim were here," said father, as he sat down to the table. "Where is he, anyway?" But Tim had fled when he saw how greatly father had suffered, and I did not see him again until the next day.

But that night, after I had gone to my dear little room and sat, half disrobed, by the open window, watching the fireflies flicker in the lower meadow, mother came softly in and clasped me to her heart, kissing me as passionately as father had done, but without sobs or tears. "You are my greatest comfort," she murmured in her old loving way, which always seemed to me to blend a lullaby and a benediction, "but I could not tell you so when your father was so greatly agitated. We must always be careful that his heart and brain are not too greatly taxed, as they have been today, for I think he would gladly have died to save this little home farm for us. Like many other soldiers, he has really sacrificed years of what

should have been a long and active life, for his wounds and long months in hospital have left weaknesses which can never be wholly outgrown. It is for you and me, Minza, to help him and lighten his burdens, and I thank God, dear little girl, that I have so brave and ready a helper as I have in you."

So we sat together for a brief space, while I called her "Dear, dear mamma," stroked her silky hair and gave and received many kisses; but as she rose and bade me good-night a single tear fell on my upturned face and I realized how under the calm and helpful exterior glowed the fire of womanly devotion and maternal tenderness.

CHAPTER IX

A Concert Tour

THE old home was saved; but alas for this era of good fortune. I had, as I thought, sold my voice for three hundred dollars.

"This money must be paid back at once to Mr. Laneson," said mother, caressing the new little brother, who had not as yet been dignified with a name.

"We will sell the business," said father.

"No," replied our little commander, "we must not part with our source of income. Minza, you must give concerts."

"How can I, mother?" I asked, incredulous.

"It must be done; I will help you. We will give one at La Ford, at Washville, at Smithville, at Brownstown, and other places if necessary."

In a few days mother began her preparations in earnest. I had to practise nine hours every week-day; with the violin six hours, the

piano two and my voice one. One day later Mr. Burroughes arrived and said that he had secured a holiday vacation to help us.

"I will be your manager, Minza," and so Fred became our advance agent and business manager.

Old Dr. Waddington owned the village paper, and the concert was advertised weeks beforehand in large, portentous black letters. The story of my saving the home from the sheriff's sale was judiciously gossiped about, and, although I did not realize what was going on, the concert was looked forward to with universal interest, for my musical studies at Boston promised unusual attraction in the minds of the country people, although its success looked dubious. It was found that the Town Hall could not be secured for that evening, and the church trustees, at the request of good old Doctor Fraser, decided to allow the use of the church on condition that "there shall be no loud or sacreligious applause."

So my first starring tour began in our church. Is it any wonder that I love its simple faith?

At the last rehearsal I was in a fever of

excitement. Mother had planned the program so as to bring all my musical powers into play. The church was lighted for the evening. Angela and the other girls had been busy with the interior decorations all the afternoon. The chandeliers and side lamps were festooned with evergreens as at Christmas time. The people began to come in early. There was the usual flutter among the children in the front seats trying to catch a glimpse of what was going on behind the curtain.

The first number was "Pull for the Shore" from Gospel Hymns. I sang the verses and the chorus joined, and when the curtains were drawn aside a real boat glided slowly across the sea-green billows of the stage, laden with passengers in Eastern garb. This was simple realism that pleased, for anything that suggests a picture of Biblical times or religious imagery always appeals to the church-going people of the smaller towns.

I cannot give the program completely, but I remember reciting Jean Ingelow's "Polish Boy" with all the shrieking fervor of the brand-new elocution student. Then I played solos

from "Mignon" and "Maritana." There is no instrumental solo that is so effective with the average audience as a violin selection. The face and form of the performer, the attitude and motion of his limbs and form, as unconsciously he bends and sways to the changing harmonies evoked by his bow and fingers, give an added and peculiar charm to the role of the violinist.

I was neatly and rather richly dressed, for Mary had insisted that I should have "one dress just like mine," and she had given me sundry bits of lace, ribbons, and natty ties, and my "Boston-made" boots were still untarnished and close-fitting. A single amethyst, the parting gift of Miss Paxton, gleamed on my bow hand, and although immature, I was straight-limbed and of good figure. I was determined to win, and strings and bow were in perfect order. Never warrior felt more certain of success as he drew his battle-tried sword than I did as I made my bow to the audience and felt my violin cuddling close to my lace-draped shoulder. How dear the old violin seemed as I caressed it! I felt my soul thrill as my fingers

touched the strings, wandering through the perilous ascents of the higher bars and descending into the dreamy cadenza amid the almost breathless silence of my friendly audience.

They could not contain their appreciation, and there was encore after encore for every violin selection, in spite of the church trustees' warning. If I remember rightly, my singing was not so well applauded, but the "Moon Dance" from "Dinorah" seemed to please. The concert was a success, and mother's dear face shone with pride and hope as she kissed me good-night.

We drove about to the succeeding concerts in lumber wagons. Our company, including mothers and aunts who went with us to look after the children, numbered thirty-two. The last concert was given at Mount Orling. Fred Burroughes told me there were fifty-two of the three hundred dollars yet to raise, and he hoped this last night would do it. Shortly before eight o'clock that evening it began to rain in perfect torrents; the outlook was very black. There were only sixteen people in the house at the time for beginning the concert.

"Will you go on with the program, Mrs. Maxwell?" anxiously whispered Fred.

"Certainly," she replied.

Of course the singers were careless, and many mistakes occurred. It nearly unnerved mother; it seemed such an inglorious end for so auspicious a beginning. For the last number I sang a solo and the chorus joined. Some of the singers forgot the retard, and the piece ended pell-mell—a breakdown! The girls and boys in the chorus sniggered, the solitary sixteen in the great room of empty chairs tittered. Quick as a flash mother struck the chords for "Home, Sweet Home," and nodded to me. Visions of the sheriff's sale came before me as I sang. Tears were in my eyes—mother's were moist.

Home, home, sweet, sweet home.

The refrain of a song that thrills the hearts of all men in every clime hushed the laughter and turned the contemptuous smiles into softened admiration. Again and yet again the last verse was encored, and our last concert was over and the curtain fell.

Just then Mr. Burroughes came forward

rather dejectedly. Old Farmer Goulden, who owned a large number of farms in the neighborhood, followed him.

"That gal ought to be a big singer, mum," he said to mother.

"Yes, sir," she replied softly.

"Durn poor house tonight. Say, little un, sing that air song ag'in."

It was sung to please him. Tears stood in his eyes.

"May I kiss the gal, mum? I just lost my little gal Olga—she sleeps in the cimetary out there, mum—she's in that home over there, the Lord be praised, mum. Say, this little gal can sing, and that's the song my Olga used to sing. Say, mum, that was worth fifty dollars to me; by gosh it was; and ye've had tuff luck tonight. Buy that gal suthin' with this. Good even'."

He was gone, and had left a crisp fifty dollar bank-note in mother's hands.

There was a consultation as to whether it should be kept. I said "yes," and Fred obeyed me, although mother protested.

It was a dreary ride home, six miles through

muddy roads after the rain; but the battle was won, and tomorrow the debt to Mr. Laneson should be nearly all paid from the concert funds, and my voice was my own again.

This was my first concert tour. Time always softens the rough edges of hard experiences, and now I look back on those days as among the happiest of my life—even a minor chord has a charm in life or in music that nothing more lively and joyous can ever equal. It is a striking fact that the songs and music of the great fighting races, notably the Irish, Scotch, and Germans—nay, one might say of Norseman, Saxon and Briton—have mainly had an undertone of sadness that was not fear, and devotion which linked the hopes of triumph with resignation to the death of the hero, and the sombre dignity of the warrior's tomb.

CHAPTER X

Father Launches into Politics

AFTER the concert experience, father surprised us by solemnly announcing that he was going into politics.

"Mother, they want me to run for town recorder. All the business men and leading taxpayers of the village have promised to support me, and—"

"Robert, you know I dislike politics, and I am afraid that you are too trusting."

"Oh, no, Helen; they would not be so anxious if that were true, and besides, the salary is two hundred dollars a year, and that would help feed these little mouths."

"Nevertheless, I don't approve of it," persisted mother; "they're a deceiving lot—those politicians."

"Well, nothing risk, nothing gain, mother. Faint heart ne'er won fair lady."

For a long time the gossips of the village talked of that election day a week later, for

the partial revolt of the younger men against "the regular ticket" was something unheard of and by the pioneer residents almost considered little better than "the unpardonable sin." They had long been accustomed to quietly make up a slate, and almost as certainly "the winning ticket." Father had good reason to believe that he would receive the humble office, whose tiny salary would mean so much to our home treasury. The more prosperous young men of the town were just then led by a young attorney who was one of those that had induced father to become a candidate; but he held that "everything is fair in politics," and he sought the office for himself. There was not much of a contest on the balance of father's ticket, which was printed as follows—I still have it:

For Mayor: WILLIAM BOWDISH

For Assessor: JAMES GALLAXY

For Trustee: WILLIAM HOOKING

For Recorder: ROBERT MAXWELL

Father was on the popular and winning ticket. I went with him to the election quarters in the afternoon. The room was blue with smoke from the cigars of a host of idlers. The ballot box was presided over by two old citizens. Clerks wrote down the names of the voters, as the tickets were folded and handed to the inspectors, and put through the small hole in the ballot-box with solemnity.

"Well, Robert," joked old Squire Green, "you'll have a walk-away." Something told me that he was lying; but guileless, trusting father believed and was happy.

A moment later father's opponent, the young attorney, Cicero Corbutt, entered the room, followed by his disorderly supporters. On their lapels they wore printed labels, "Sooner men."

"Rah for Cicero! We're 'Sooners,' we are, and we'll knock out the durned old machine mossbacks."

They filed in and voted. Many of them were men temporarily employed in building a railroad some distance from the village. Cicero glared at us through his spectacles as if to say, "I'm a politician."

"We'll fix 'em, boys—we must hustle some more votes," he cried.

"Rah for the 'Sooners'!" was the echoing response.

"Come an' have something, boys," declaimed the oratorical Cicero, and he led his horde of railroaders and town loafers out of the door.

How breathlessly we waited the result of the count that night! I had my fears, but hoped and prayed somehow that father had a majority of the votes. He laughed at my anxiety.

"Why," he said confidently, "do you suppose that Smithville, the respectable taxpayers of Smithville, will allow those rowdies to rule us? I must go down and be ready for congratulations."

Not long after he had gone we heard the wild yells from the Town Hall, "Rah for Sooners—Sooners gits there—whoop-la-tiger-ree!"

Father's ticket had won the day, but Cicero had printed "split" tickets with all the names of the opposition ticket on them except father's, and his own name inserted instead. Many of the tickets had undoubtedly been put in by

voters under the impression that they were voting the straight ticket with father's name upon it, but they had voted the fatal "split" ticket and it was impossible "to go back on the returns."

The winning candidate had induced an honorable man to run for office; had promised him his support and discussed with him the simple tactics of an honest canvass; and then had his own name substituted on an apparently straight ticket, and presumably brought in a lot of fraudulent voters, primed with whiskey, and utterly irresponsible as citizens.

But this was American politics; it was called shrewd and sharp tactics.

All was done that could be done at the last, but even as a few belated friends drove up to the door the polls were closed, and the result was soon announced.

"Three cheers for Cicero!" rang out on the night air.

The day was lost and father soon came home. "Beaten by two votes," was all he said.

"Enough of politics, Robert," said mother softly.

I felt very bitter toward Cicero Corbutt, but our ways soon drifted apart, and I never had an opportunity for my well-planned revenge. Every politician has his day, and the leader of the "Sooners" was shelved in the prime of life; they say he is now a political derelict, struggling to rise again.

As to father, he retired from the dazzling arena of American politics, and never forgot the lesson.

CHAPTER XI

My First Sweetheart

IN spite of the political defeat, we managed to live. We can always bear reverses better when realized than when anticipated. I continued going to school and assisting father at the music store, and mother was able to resume her teaching.

My last days at the old brick schoolhouse, with its cracked bell, were, I think, the happiest of my life.

Our teacher was Ellen Riser, a typical, strong-minded, self-reliant American woman, and loved by us all. What a rivalry there was among us girls to stay with her at night! She always seemed above us; not out of our reach —but always one of us. Her methods of teaching were rather unconventional. We were taught to probe for reason and logic rather than to memorize rules, and her clear methods of explanation always illuminated our childish comprehension. She interested us and inspired

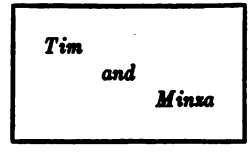
us with a generous rivalry that stimulated effort and ambition for the future. She cared little for the parrot-like recitation of tables of weights and measures, rules of grammar and the like, but she would cut an apple into fractions to enlighten a dazed pupil, and get the boys excited over a contest in laying out a square rod, rood or acre, in the adjoining fields. She encouraged each to make the most of his natural gifts, and even sly little "Monkey Dean," who drew a singularly crude but effective cartoon of the new teacher, was only suitably admonished and delighted with the gift of some simple drawing cards, whence in due season he evolved some pictures in colored crayons which were the wonder of the district and the pride of the school.

She allowed us boys and girls to talk together during recess and after school. The boys somehow would manage to sit beside us at classes, and by passing from hand to hand an occasional sly note during school hours would arrange "company home" after the Lyceum, held every Friday night in the high school room, from which entertainments the

boys were allowed to see the girls home. It was thus that—oh, most foolishly happy and most memorable day—I received my first note, which read: "May I see you safely home from Lyceum Friday night?—TIMOTHY RATHBONE."

I had always been styled "red-headed," and felt keenly the imputation of being "homely," and even now I laugh and blush to think how that simple tribute thrilled me. I had always "been a sister" to the boys before, helping on the innocent amours of the other couples; but now I had a lover of my own. I replied, in a tiny mis-spelled little note: "Your company is excepted.—MINZA."

Next morning, as was customary when a boy and girl began to talk interestingly alone together, there appeared on the blackboard in flaming letters, these words:



to the temporary confusion of Tim and myself and the unalloyed delight of our schoolmates.

So Tim and I went on through our schooldays, passing from the intermediate to the grammar grade, from grammar to high, playing hard and working together, ideal boy and girl companions.

In those days it was quite the rage among school children to give "surprise parties," when we would gather at a friend's house, each bringing his or her share of refreshments, and then raid the village, intent on giving someone a "surprise party." We did not dance as a rule, and the amusements were generally kissing games, in which even the "old folks" present took part, and we had good honest merriment and a hearty supper to end it all. How well I remember these parties, when the clothesline arena of "Copenhagen" was shaken and swayed by flying girls and pursuing swains, when serried rows of seated girls "clapped out" the unfortunate who flattered himself that he knew who wanted him seated in the chair beside her; and the rippling fun of "cover," "post-office," "spat 'em out," "hissing and clapping," with forfeits and fines, and the merriment incident to paying the penalties.

The first night Tim took me home he barely touched my arm, and we almost ran, rather than walked along the road. They called Tim "Wildy," an abbreviation for "Wild Irishman," but his heart was good; he loved his mother, and that won my sympathy and respect.

One night we passed the old limekiln on our way home from the Lyceum. It was a lovely night in June. The air was heavy with the subtly-odorous aroma of newly-turned ground and the smouldering of burning leaves in the gardens. The summer moon and twinkling stars made the night glorious.

"Minza, we graduate this month, and I'm going away," said Tim at last.

"Is that so?" said I innocently, although I knew it well.

"Yes, and we're going to part, and I—"

"Oh, isn't that a pretty star, Tim?"

"Now, Minza, you can't break in that way; we're going to be married some day."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, and you know it; I'm going to be a lawyer, and I want you to—"

"Look out for that cow, Tim!"

"Now, Minza, you must not flirt and go with the other fellows, when I am gone, will you?"

"Why, Tim, we can't be married right away, and—" but he would not be denied.

"Minza, you're the best girl on earth, next to mother."

I liked him even for that exception—but I was only a young girl then.

"And now I am going to kiss you," he continued in his own brusque way. "When I'm a lawyer, we will travel over Europe, like Mrs. Buggins."

"Don't you think these are the same stars that are over in Europe now?"

"Minza's my star always," he said, as ardently as a boy can, as he kissed me again and held me in his arms, as he had seen lovers on the stage and in pictures. We were betrothed.

I think pictures and stage scenes educate boys and girls into young lovers. Tim's dark, earnest eyes were very sincere, and his silky curls falling just below his little cap made him a charming picture of a young girl's first lover.

Graduation Day drew near. Tim was to deliver the valedictory, a tribute to his good

record and really excellent declamation. In his neat new suit and white vest and gloves, he looked the part he sought to play on the stage of life: the honest, earnest, fearless country boy, going into the big cities to pit his simple honesty against intrigue and temptation. The exercises were to be held in the church, which was decorated with the roses and flowers of June, and over the stage was a translated Latin motto worked in evergreens:

"NO STEPS BACKWARD"

All was excitement over our dresses. Here began my first wrestle with stage costumes. There were sixteen in the class and we had our pictures taken the afternoon before Graduation Day.

What ambitious hopes throbbed that night. We felt as if we were quite ready for real life. Miss Riser assisted at the rehearsal of our essays and orations. My theme was "The Tale of an Old Shoe"; the others learnedly discussed "Success," "Happiness," "Wisdom," and other great problems.

Evening arrived. Mother was there to look after the music, and even little Joe and the babies were brought "to see Sissy graduate." All the parents beamed fondly upon the graduates. Old Beemer, the deaf blacksmith, was in the front seat, and his eyes never left sweet, blushing little Dora, his only daughter. We sat in a semicircle; all the girls were clad in white and resplendent in white slippers. Miss Riser sat at one side, attired in neat black, with white ruching and laces about her neck.

Some of the boys forgot their orations, and the same breathless thrill held me that I still feel just before appearing on the stage. The smaller girls brought the floral trophies and laid them at our feet.

" 'Tale of an Old Shoe,' Miss Minza Maxwell!" I arose and bowed to Miss Riser.

"Dat's my sissy! dat's my sissy!" broke out little Jimmy in the audience.

A little nervously I started to read. The first pages were missing! I looked and felt blank. Miss Riser glanced over and blushed. An awkward pause. I looked straight ahead

despairingly, and from memory repeated, as best I could, the missing pages. As soon as I could depend upon the manuscript again the terrible lump in my throat left me, but it did not save me from a poignant sense of humiliation, although a generous round of applause followed my really well-composed peroration.

After the exercises the audience surged forward to congratulate the happy young graduates, but I felt ashamed and so humiliated by my failure that I could scarcely restrain my tears, until Miss Riser, who had parted with the others, took me aside and gave me a warm kiss.

"Dear Minza, you are going to be famous some day. I am proud of you. In the years to come, do not forget how your old school teacher loved you.

"You must not feel too bad over your disappointment, for great speakers often meet with worse accidents, and do not overcome them half as bravely as you did; and the last part of your theme was the finest of them all."

That autumn father unexpectedly fell in with an old comrade who had in charge the collec-

tion department of a great corporation engaged in making and selling agricultural machinery. The harvesters, headers, gang plows, wagons, engines, and threshing machines so univesally used by Iowan farmers were generally bought on terms that included a moderate cash payment, and secured notes for the balance at six months, one and two years, which were seldom paid unless gently pressed upon the notice of the debtor, no matter how successful the season. The local agents did not like to become unpopular; the local banks and attorneys had their own interests, and those of more favored correspondents to consider, and the machinery company hired special collectors to close up the year's business.

Father was engaged at once and given charge of three or four counties, at a salary of one hundred dollars a month and expenses, and I never saw such a change in any man as he presented, hopeful, animated and ready to start out with ample funds for expenses and a week's salary to leave at home. It was his first relief from loss, humiliation and poverty for several years, and it did me good

to see that dear, brave, loyal father once more "himself again." Mother was now to stay at home, and a favorable offer was made for the store and good will; it was only a few hundred dollars, but mother had many pupils, and was determined that I should go to college before resuming my musical career.

I don't know that I properly appreciated the self-sacrifice and care of my parents; indeed, I think that very few young people do. We get used to being petted, fed, clothed and mothered; go out away from home to enjoy ourselves and back home again to eat and to sleep, and certainly fail to see how father grows weary sooner than he did years ago and how mother's form and hands have lost much of their shapeliness with interminable labors of love for the nestlings which erelong, for their own good, the parent birds must push out of the cosy home nest.

As the train bore me away from Smithville my mind wandered back to those sleeping baby faces, and to mother, holding the lamp and shading her eyes for a last look at me through the darkness.

Well, life is made up of greetings and partings, but it always seemed to me that some of my saddest trials were these partings and absences from home.

In the United States the apartment house, the big department store, the ease, rapidity and common use of transportation facilities have a decided tendency to lessen the charm and sentiment that has made "Home, Sweet Home" a strong and conserving factor in American life. Sometimes I think that there are no American homes today in the big cities.

CHAPTER XII

The Entrance and Exit at College

THERE are many good colleges, but of course I think old Cornwell is the best of all, and yet I vividly recall how lonesome and strange it seemed on my first arrival! From the pictures I had seen I recognized the buildings on the hills, and the foliage was radiant with the brightest hues of autumn. The old chapel tower and the chimes of the clock still mingle with my first recollections.

We drove along the shaded road up the long hill to the "Sem," or "Nunnery," as it was called. Here the girls boarded.

As we passed by the long row of pleasant cottages I fancied that each occupant must necessarily be a theological student without care or thought for worldly things.

Who knew but in one of these homes there dwelt the typical young student with long moustache who would captivate my youthful fancies? Here, on the other hand, I thought, a

professor must dwell, for there was a hammock on the porch, and what student would have time to swing in a hammock?

Miss Booker, the preceptress, met me on the broad steps that led up to the study halls over the dining-room. The girls peeped from behind the doors of the rooms, giving shy glances at me as I passed through the hall with my homely green bag. How I longed for Angela or someone that I knew!

Miss Booker was a severely intellectual woman, cold and austere. Her face was wrinkled from study, and her false teeth made her mouth look full, firm and decided, but she was a woman of lofty ideals and tried to be kind; a rather difficult task I realize today for a woman with a never-ending succession of immature, undisciplined feminines to keep in comfort, good order and a reasonable devotion to study. I see now, as I did not see then, that emotional people cannot long indulge in effusive tenderness and keep up a healthy discipline. I have no doubt that we were all somewhat unjust in our estimate of Miss Booker.

After Professor Garlem, the president, had classified me as a result of my examination marks from the High School, I began to feel more at home. As I was the last pupil to arrive, I was given a little room on the third floor by myself. The furniture was simple—a chair, table, washstand, small mirror, a little wooden bedstead and a rug. Yet it was seclusion—a retreat, and I soon learned to love it as home. At seven o'clock in the morning we were to be ready for breakfast in the basement. Our oatmeal was always steaming hot. At 7.45 came our Latin lesson, with its endless conjugations and declensions. The conjugations were a nightmare.

At 8.30 the dear old chapel bell rang out the summons for the day. We each had our particular seat at the table and in the chapel.

The devotional exercises were conducted in turn by different members of the faculty. Professor Boysen's long prayers were supposed to match his long, patriarchal whiskers. He reminded me of the pictures of Moses. Little Professor Goblin's study of Greek gave him choice language, but his Boston pronunciation

made it just as difficult to understand as the Greek itself. Miss Booker's appeals were cold and classic, like her smiles. Professor Collinsgate's prayer was a meek and timid supplication from a soft-voiced and timid little man. Professor Brighton was always short, sharp, and crusty, and his low shoes often revealed the dissimilar colors of poorly matched hosiery. Professor Wilhelm looked upward with much the same civil-engineering squint as when he peered through a theodolite in teaching practical mensuration to his class. It is still told how in one of his appeals for the divine favor, he began by saying, "Paradoxical as it may appear unto thee, O Lord, it is, nevertheless, true"—most of the sentence being almost word for word a part of his remarks in the classroom a day or two before.

These impromptu prayers were so often repeated that each one seemed to have committed his pet phrases to memory, and the same words rolled out time after time. Lieutenant Jenkins from West Point, who had charge of the college battalions, did not lead in religious services. He simply bowed his bald head very

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reverently and looked good. Miss Bernard, one of the teachers in the Musical Conservatory, presided at the grand piano and gave her pretty head a nod to begin the singing. Those songs were the inspiring portion of the service. How the five hundred voices used to ring out the old "Portuguese Hymn":

"How firm a foundation,
Ye saints of the Lord."

Strangers to our Alma Mater and distinguished visitors were usually requested to address a few remarks to the student body, and how wickedly we used to pray that their speeches would encroach on the next class hour, which was usually a course in mathematics.

Under Miss Bernard I continued my vocal studies and gradually became acquainted with the other students. I thought it a crowning honor when the Philomathean Society invited me to join their circle. A few days later the Galateans, the rival society, also invited me; but I chose the first. Programs of a literary and musical character were given every Friday

evening and I was often asked to give vocal selections. After the exercises a social session was held, and "Rule No. 12" was suspended for the occasion, and the boys allowed to "see" the girls home. The first few times I walked across the campus alone to the "Sem," with the other homely girls. But all homely girls have some charm which attracts admiration more than mere beauty itself. A well-formed and delicate hand, a dimpled, cheery face, shining teeth, pretty hair, laughing eyes, or a clever tongue—every girl is blessed with some attraction, and womankind spends a large fraction of her waking hours in planning to appear beautiful.

I envied the more attractive girls with lovers, but one night Bob Burnette, the janitor of the "Sem," asked to "see me home." He was a bright fellow, and always left me a generous amount of wood with which to build my fires. He had worn his coat through by carrying the firewood on his shoulders, and I mended it for him. We became good friends, and he called me his "sister."

"Surely," thought I, "Tim will not care," as

I looked into the boyish face of the photograph on my table.

Robert was my father's name, and I was rather pleased to have his namesake's company. He pressed my arm tightly as we walked down the lane shaded with trees on either side, and lit by the moonbeams shining through the latticework of branches. Such scenes are love's favorite shrines, for a few half-whispered words and glances in such soft, silent shadows speak subtly to the heart.

Robert was a self-reliant fellow, making his way through college and studying for the ministry. While he was not exactly ostracized by the "Sem" girls, they seemed to think very little of associating with "our janitor." The rich men's sons were in greater demand.

Now I had no idea of falling in love with him. In fact, I don't think I knew what love was, but I must confess I liked him, and in the opinion of "the girls" he was my "solid fellow."

One Saturday, after a lonely walk, I found a note under my door, with a liberal allowance of firewood outside:

"Minza, I must see you tonight.—ROBERT."

I could not imagine what it meant, as we always met each other several times a day.

It had been raining, and was a cold, damp night. I wanted to post a letter home. Robert was passing with an umbrella.

"Robert, may I borrow your umbrella?"

"You may, if you borrow me."

"All right," I said, and off we went in the rain. The umbrella was small and we were rather close together. He was evidently nervous about something and talked but little. Just as we were about to turn into the campus, under the light of a street lamp, he turned to me and said:

"Minza, I love you, and—" That was as far as he got. I did not expect it and turned pale.

"Minza, will you love me?" he continued, slipping his arm about my waist.

I pushed it away and turned paler. Had I been a flirt? Poor Tim's face was before me, but Robert's dark eyes flashed Love. I gave no answer. He pressed my hand.

"My life is yours, Minza."

We went to the society rooms, where I was

to sing. It was not a love song, or one fitted to express sentiment, but Robert followed me closely with his eyes, and my voice quivered.

"She must be ill tonight," I heard them say as I passed out.

"Take me home, Robert," I pleaded. His eyes seemed to pierce me deeper than ever. I gave him no answer, but he kissed me.

Was I a coquette?

"Minza, don't trifle. Marry for love—don't flirt—and remember how I love you," and he gave me that self-reliant and reckless look which I so much admired. Schoolgirls sometimes take these matters very seriously. Here was I with two lovers, and not yet sixteen!

A religious revival was in progress, and many students were "converted" or born again. The singing was very effective, and the influence of the young ladies undoubtedly caused many of the young men to declare their acceptance of the better way, and it was a noble and earnest revival of religious feeling.

I did not believe in a public profession of faith and was looked upon as a very wicked girl. Robert, on the other hand, often led at

prayer-meetings, and was always eloquent in his pleadings and exhortations! It worried him because I was not active in these matters, and later I gave him my religious views in detail.

On the college bulletin boards in a glass case, near the main entrance, was the program of the "Joint Public" to be given by the Philomathean and Galatean Societies. My name was there; I liked to see it there. These Publics were the great events of the term.

At the coming Public I was to sing, and Robert was to deliver an oration as the representative of the Galatean Society. The large auditorium was thronged. My song was a beautiful piece of plaintive music replete with minor chords—"There is no hope beyond." I did not think especially of the sentiment conveyed by the words, as the music itself was really beautiful. My solo preceded Robert's oration. When I finished I saw that it had brought a frown to the faces of the professors in the front seats, "but Robert's pure high-minded religious ideas will please them," thought I. His clear voice rang out:

"I am not a believer in lip-service religion

and in emotional revivals, and will not serve as a minister to God until I have felt a special call to his service. I believe in my God and Saviour, but a too common profession of religion—putting it on and off like a cloak—destroys its sacredness."

Horrors! His words fell like a bombshell. He had expressed my sentiments, and how I wished I had never uttered them.

The cloud darkened, for his oration, with its innocent title, "Hell and Hypocrisy," which was supposed to be a learned theological argument, had passed through the professors' hands without reading. He was just at that age when a college student will approach any subject for his oration and swing the world above his head.

His oration and my song were the talk and scandal of the week. We expected to be tried and convicted by the faculty and reprimanded in chapel. Linked together in offence, we naturally drifted together in sympathy with each other.

The next week Professor Garlem called us into his room, No. 14.

"Miss Maxwell, for the safety of the young minds in our care, and the religious institutions this college represents, it has been decided that you and Mr. Burnette are to retire for one term at least. There are only two weeks more of the present term, and it need not be known—"

"It will be known!" flashed out Robert. "Your bigotry in trying to contract and narrow our minds to a single religious belief is a disgrace. Freedom of thought—"

"Never mind now; this has been decided upon," said Professor Garlem firmly.

"Thank you, sir," I responded with bitter sarcasm.

"This girl is innocent, sir," said Robert warmly. "I am the culprit, and you are cowards to visit upon her my humiliation."

"Be cool, Mr. Burnette," replied the Professor, "it may all be for the best. We bear no malice."

"No," retorted Robert warmly, "nor sincere love of humanity either."

Of course I cried that night. Robert tried to comfort me as he carried up his wood, and

I stood on the stairs talking to him until Miss Booker ordered me to my room.

One term at college and suspended! It stung my pride! How could I tell my mother? Robert now seemed to have claims on me, and I could not help admiring his pluck.

"Minza," he said, "I am going to be a newspaper man—going to Dakota—it's booming; when I am settled we'll be married."

"I am only sixteen," I murmured brokenly, "besides, my mother—"

"Well, we'll see," he replied confidently.

An effort was made to keep the expulsion quiet, but, like all State secrets, it oozed through the keyholes or somewhere, and all the students knew of it.

Robert and I stood on the rear platform of the train when we left Cornwell and watched the old chapel, the "Sem" and Nunnery fade from view. We were sad, for, although in one way we were not sorry to leave, yet there was a feeling of banishment about it all.

I reached home with a heavy heart and told mother everything. She, of course, called them "stupids," and said I was right; but she

did not like the idea of this Robert Burnette being associated with me in this public way.

"Where does he live?" asked mother.

"At Shelbyville," I replied absently.

"That is where Tim has gone," continued mother, and she looked at me a little quizzically, for the school gossip had not altogether escaped her.

I retired, weary and anxious, but for a long time I could not sleep. Robert's masterful wooing had certainly made me forget my boyish school sweetheart. Would he learn of it now and quarrel with his rival, or denounce me as fickle and unfaithful, as indeed I was?

CHAPTER XIII

The First Break in the Circle

NATURALLY there was a good deal of gossip current at Smithville concerning my return from college, but it proved fortunate in several ways. Father finished collecting in February, and mother, with her teaching and three babies, left me quite enough to do.

It was in midwinter that baby Tod was taken ill with inflammation of the lungs. I was his nurse, and either mother or I was always at his bedside. With a suffering baby, you cannot locate the ailment or know always what to do. It is a pitiable sight to see a mother wearing herself out and unable to help her suffering child.

How vividly I recall that illness! Through the long dismal afternoons I often made holes through the frost on the window pane and watched for the doctor. What a comfort it was to see his portly form coming around the

corner! The crisis was not passed with Tod when Joe began to complain. His illness did not seem to be serious, and father tucked him in bed with the joking remark, "We shall soon have quite a hospital." Suddenly I noticed Joe coughing severely, and he seemed to be wilting away.

"Send for the doctor, quick!" I cried to father.

Mother was soon there; the little heart was just beating. "He's in a fit," she cried.

The doctor arrived. "Oh, he will pull through all right," he said hopefully, as he measured out some powders in a paper and labelled them "One every hour."

How long that night seemed as mother and I watched over two baby cots! Little Joe was now in danger. At midnight the dear little limbs writhed in another convulsion.

The alarm was given, and kind neighbors soon came in but could do nothing to save him.

Father was kneeling at the bedside, still chafing the little one's feet; mother felt his pulse, but the tiny heart had ceased to beat, and little Joe was dead.

Have you ever felt that first stifling flood of grief for the loved and lost? I thought God was cruel and had punished me for my wickedness at Cornwell.

Toward morning, worn out, I threw myself on my bed and cried out, "Shall I never see little Joe any more? Is he dead? No, it cannot be."

In my restless sleep I dreamed that little Joe and I were playing together at the old limekiln, with the waves washing upon the white stones. Then Christ, bright and radiant, clothed in snowy raiment, called us to him, and we floated up into the blue empyrean, ever growing more glorious as we drew near the eternal source of life and light. A throng of glorified beings suddenly poured out of the ether and across the stainless pavements of the Holy City; a wonderful chorus swelled and strengthened as they drew near—"Glory to God in the highest." But when I awoke I could not realize the truth.

"Joe, little Joe!" I cried out wildly in my grief and, in fancy, from heaven I seemed to hear his childish voice calling, "Minza's coming, too."

One never likes to acknowledge family preferences, but little Joe had always been my favorite. Oh, I loved him so, and now he was taken from me forever. I tried to comfort mother, but her grief was too deep to reach with words.

Oh, that last kiss of our dead! Into what household has it not entered? It is this last parting caress that breaks the mother's heart, when she thinks of her child in the cold and lonely grave. It is when the lid is last sealed that the mother's heart-fountains burst forth.

For months after I could not visit little Joe's grave. Mother and father used to go every Sunday with flowers, but I could not bear to. I could gaze on the enlarged picture in the parlor, and the sweet baby eyes that looked down upon me—mother's own eyes—but I always thought of that midnight vision in which I seemed to see his glorified form ascending the stairs of living light and joining the numberless multitude of the hosts of heaven.

Time may wear away the pangs, the paroxysms of grief, but today my heart is touched and purified by its tender memories of little

Joe, and I love to lay my own gift of flowers upon that little grave, and to think that when life's fever is over I shall peacefully lie beside the little form I loved so well.

Life's first real grief and greatest bereavement had sounded for me another and deeper Minor Chord.

CHAPTER XIV

Father's Belated Pension Arrives

THE spring brought no new resources to father, whose health remained poor, and now grief and worry began to undermine mother's strength. One day Dr. Waddington called and looked over his spectacles inquiringly at father.

"Robert, were you in the army?"

"Yes, 42d Volunteers."

"Were you ever wounded?"

"Several times—at Vicksburg and Shiloh."

"I thought so. Do you know I think you are suffering from those wounds today?"

"Tut, tut, man, I got over it and am as well and strong as ever."

"Oh, of course," replied the Doctor sarcastically. "But you come to the office and let me make an examination."

That afternoon father went down and the doctor found that the old wounds, although ostensibly healed, were still working mischief.

Dr. Waddington came up to our house late in the evening, very much upset. He took off his worn silk hat and excitedly wiped his bald head.

"Mrs. Maxwell," he demanded, "can't you put some sense into that man's head?"

"How's that, Doctor?"

"Robert deserves a pension for his army service, and not only that, but back pay as well."

"Yes," she replied soberly, "but, Doctor, you cannot get a pension without political influence, and you know Robert is not much of a politician."

"Well, that may be," admitted the Doctor, "but it's worth trying for."

"All right, he'll do it." When mother said so, that settled it.

The application was made, and the necessary evidence of service, discharge, etc., sent to the young Congressman representing our district. He replied promptly, stating that he remembered meeting father, and would "give the matter immediate and personal attention."

I'm afraid that the phrase must have been a little overworked by Iowan Congressmen,

for it did not seem to awaken implicit confidence in the hearts of our parents.

"That's the way he writes to all of them," said neighbor Sally Smith ironically.

We thought little of the matter until one morning while I was helping father with the housework, and mother was busy giving a lesson, a telegram was handed to me.

"This must be a mistake, I don't receive telegrams," I said to the messenger.

"No, it isn't; I knows my business," he answered saucily.

There it was, addressed: "MINZA MAXWELL."

I tore it open hastily. It was dated "Washington, D. C.," and read as follows:

"Your father's pension and back pay granted. Letter follows. Congratulations.

"THOMAS BAYLING, M. C.,
"Per TIM, *Secy.*"

"Tim! Could it be Tim Rathbone?" I said excitedly.

"It seems we have a friend at court," said mother smiling.

Impatiently we waited for that letter. Father insisted that he could hardly believe the news,

and even mother did not seem to have much confidence in the telegraphic information.

During the next week a bulky envelope came in a letter marked "Official Business." Inside were numerous blank forms to fill, and a statement that "Robert Maxwell, Co. M., 42d Iowa Volunteers, is granted a pension of six dollars per month and back pay amounting to $1,276.60."

It seemed too good to be true, for, as if by magic, the spectre of want and sickness disappeared, and father was again able to care for his family. That evening we were busy planning what to do with the money.

"It seems so heavenly," I cried and went to the piano and played the gayest waltz I knew. Then I hugged my violin and galloped off a mazurka. It was such a relief to know that for a while at least my dear parents could have the needed rest and recuperation that was so necessary to their well-being.

The family council lasted long into the night. Mother wanted to use the money to complete my musical studies and father agreed. At first I wanted to re-invest it in a business, but when

I surveyed mother's poor wan face a suggestion occurred to me.

"Mother," I burst out, "you and father must start next week for England and visit dear old grandpa. It will do you good and break—"

"No, no, dear, we cannot think of it. You must complete your studies," said mother quickly.

"First, Helen, we must pay our debts—that one thousand dollars," interposed father.

"Now, Robert, let me handle this matter. This money shall not pay a penny of that debt," said mother firmly.

"But is it honest?" protested father. "What will people say?"

"Never mind, let me manage that," and mother managed it.

It was finally settled that Jimmy was to remain with me and mother and father with little Tod were to start the following week to visit the scenes of father's childhood in dear old England.

Here, again, was the breaking of home ties, and although I was enthusiastic about their

going, it was hard to part with them and to know that the wide Atlantic must roll between us.

Nevertheless I was really glad to have them go, and nothing in the world would have tempted me to dissuade them, but I had a passionate love of home and family ties that was little short of morbid in its intensity, and it has seemed the very irony of fate that I, who would have been well content to lead a simple home life in a quiet western town, to marry in a commonplace, unobtrusive way and settle down near my father's house, to build up a like home of my own, should have formed and cherished a musical ambition which has led me thousands of miles away and years apart from my loved ones.

The midnight train for Chicago was to take them away. We tried to be cheerful that evening, but our faces reflected serious forebodings. At the last all was bustle and hurry, the loving advice of motherly care and oft-repeated parting kisses. Little Tod chattered with delight and was forever in the way, and Jimmy cried, while the 'bus stood waiting.

It was May, and the lilacs and snowballs were in bloom, their fragrance filling the air, but the next day the old home seemed desolate. Jimmy kept me busy and was soon off to school. It is always those left at home who most keenly feel the pangs of parting.

How anxiously I watched the newspapers for the arrival of the steamer! It was overdue, and I pictured a shipwreck in mid-ocean, greatly upsetting the nervous Angela, who was staying with me.

One day Angela came running toward the house from the village post-office. "It's there, it's there!" she cried far down the street, and a heavy load was lifted from our hearts. I kissed Jim's jam-covered face over and over again. The steamer had reached Southampton.

They were to be gone three months, and it seemed like a century. In the meantime Robert's letters arrived frequently. He was a hard-headed, practical, businesslike fellow, and always wrote sensibly. A few weeks later a short note from Tim announced that he would return to Smithville for a short vacation the following week.

Here was a dilemma!

I told Angela all about it and insisted that she must take one of my lovers off my hands.

"Which one?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter," I replied desperately, for I felt so grateful for the unexpected pension payments that Tim seemed to have greater claims on me now, if we *did* quarrel in our letters, and had, indeed, ceased correspondence until the pension telegram was received.

Then, too, he was my first sweetheart, although Robert seemed to be taking matters for granted.

The next week I was reading one of Robert's long letters when there was a knock at the door.

It was Tim Rathbone, and before I could recover from my momentary confusion he kissed me. When I found my tongue, I tried to thank him for his kindly interest on behalf of father's pension.

"Don't mention it, Meg," he replied, "let's take a walk down to the old limekiln. Yes, bring Jimmy along, if you will," and we went down to the ruined arch and shadowed roadside.

"Oh, you're too big now. Besides, Tim, you're—you've got a mustache"

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"Minza," said Tim, when Jimmy was at a safe distance, "you are growing beautiful. Do you still sing?"

"A little, to put the baby to sleep. Don't I, Jimkins?" I said, appealing to the young rascal, but he was out of hearing.

"I'll be Tod, Meg—please!"

"Oh, you're too big now. Besides, Tim, you've—you've got a moustache."

"Don't you remember, Meg, that that was my greatest ambition as a boy? When I had a moustache like Judge Buggins, then—hullo—who's coming?"

Down from the house came Fred Burroughes, tall, neatly garbed, and genial as ever.

"That," said I, "is Mr. Burroughes, my friend."

"Ah, Mr. Burroughes, your *friend*, is it?" said Tim sourly.

I advanced to meet him, and when he bent to kiss me, I shrank back and looked at Tim Rathbone, who did not seem pleased at Mr. Burroughes' familiarity.

"Why, Minza, what's the matter, little one?" said Fred Burroughes.

I could not answer. Those deep blue eyes seemed to express his pain and read my thoughts.

"Well, I'll not bother you," he said, and started to go.

"Mr. Rathbone," said I, introducing them, "this is Mr. Burroughes—Mr. Burroughes, Mr. Rathbone." They bowed stiffly and Fred left us, and although I called after him, he was soon out of hearing. However, he came to the house later, and with the help of Angela we spent a pleasant afternoon with our music.

Like all young people, Tim Rathbone and I had an occasional "spat" or quarrel, as persons do who know each other well. It is human nature for even lovers to wear off the rough edges of temper on one another. As my housework took a great deal of my time, Angela and Tim were thrown together more than I really liked, although I had asked her, as my younger sister, to entertain him, and had really abdicated in her favor, if she chose to seek his affections. I liked Fred Burroughes, I was grateful to Tim Rathbone, and did not know how to resist Robert Burnette's master-

ful wooing, and yet I did not want to marry any of them. Nevertheless I am sure I should have been bitterly jealous of any other woman who married any of the three, and would always have brooded more or less over a dissipated love-dream. Do you wonder that young girls make mistakes in a maelstrom of wooing?

The day before July 4, when the village was preparing for one of the real old-fashioned celebrations of our national birthday, I wandered with Jimmy through the grove to the limekiln.

The lemonade booths covered with boughs and the different amusement tents and shooting galleries were set up, and the speakers' platform looked very imposing. Tim Rathbone was to read the Declaration of Independence and I was to sing "Hail Columbia!" I thought how handsome he would look with his curly hair, and I pictured him in the future as a great statesman. The village brass band were holding their last rehearsal in the Town Hall, and the tuba bass solo and alto horns were nearly raising the roof. The sky was clear, and the setting sun behind the purple grove was sending

up lances of sunshine from the foliage that lined the horizon. It was to be a typical spread-eagle American Fourth of July, and the British lion's tail was to be properly twisted.

I was happy just then, but somehow I felt like teasing—and I teased Tim Rathbone all the evening. He tried to be serious and to talk with me alone, but I showed him Bob's photograph and talked of my life at Cornwell and of how good Mr. Burroughes had been. Tim took Angela home, and left me in a very bad humor.

And I was wayward and thoughtless, for my love for Tim had been a girl's light fancy, while his was a fiercer and more exacting passion. He had dealt with mature men and women, even the statesmen and lobbyists at Washington, and I could not feel, as he did, the serious and all-important ties which I, at least, had so lightly formed. I have blamed myself much for my waywardness that night, but as I look back I cannot but feel that Tim was more to blame than I. I owed much to Fred Burroughes, who, without my knowledge, had helped my parents to defray my earlier

musical training, and my childish admiration and later gratitude were only his due.

Bob Burnette in his powerful way had, as it were, taken by storm and for granted my tacit consent to a betrothal that was made more romantic by a common sense of injustice at the hands of the Cornwell faculty, and Tim was too jealous to do justice to either or to be forbearing to me. To both of us it brought great sorrow, for I could never quite forget the generous and kindly boy who first awoke in my girlish heart the magical flame of the divine passion.

CHAPTER XV

The Glorious Fourth

THE festivities of Independence Day began with the booming of cannon and the snapping of fire crackers. The parade was imposing, and Angela was charming as "Columbia" in a float surrounded by thirty-seven little girls, each representing one of the states. The exercises passed off smoothly. Tim Rathbone was applauded to the echo, but we had scarcely spoken to each other all day.

That evening a company of young friends sat with me on the veranda watching the fireworks; at last the closing piece of the display, a "Good-Night" emblazoned in a five-colored wheel, burst forth. Two figures came down the path—Angela and Tim.

"Where have you naughty folks been?" I asked jokingly.

"We've been married," spoke up Tim, defiantly.

"Yes, I guess so," said Nettie Rand flip-

pantly. She was a tall black-browed "Irish blonde," who had been more than noticeably attentive to Tim herself; but I saw her dark face whiten, even in the dim light of the Japanese transparencies.

My guests seemed to feel the sudden check to the tide of patriotic gayety. The brilliant fireworks were blackened cases and shattered bombs; the gay lanterns were dying out; and weary and powder-burned children were crying as their tired parents hastened home. The joyous little party paired off, and with half incredulous and half-whispered congratulations to the young couple, said good-night to me.

It was a blow which staggered me. I thought they were joking, and kissed Angela; but another glance at Tim's face told me that they were, indeed, man and wife. I turned to go into the house.

"Good-night," I gasped.

"Why, Meg, won't you congratulate me?" pleaded Angela innocently. She had taken me at my word and married one of my lovers.

It was a great blow, for although it had been

a girlish fancy rather than a deep and abiding passion, I had really loved my old, light-hearted, generous playmate. Now that he was taken out of my life forever, I thought that my heart was broken. "Alone, alone," seemed the solemn minor burden of the night breezes as I entered the silent darkness of my almost deserted home.

"Love, love, what wilt thou with this heart of mine?
Naught see I fixed or sure in thee!
I do not know thee—nor what deeds are thine;
Love, love, what wilt thou with this heart of mine?
Naught see I permanent or sure in thee!"

When I awoke the next morning I again thought it surely must be a joke that they had played upon me, but their marriage was only too true.

A large number of American marriages originate from motives of pique or loneliness rather than from love. We seldom marry our real sweethearts. Love! What is love? Certainly it has never yet been analyzed in words. But when Tim was beyond my reach I thought

I loved him, and especially when I fancied he had married Angela out of spite toward me.

That night I was ready to offer myself as a foreign missionary to go among the heathen, but a day or so before I expected father and mother to return, Robert Burnette made his appearance, as self-reliant, conceited and energetic as ever.

He kissed me coolly and said that he had been arranging to start a newspaper in Dakota.

"Will you be my assistant editor?" he asked calmly, puffing at his cigar.

"That's scarcely romantic," I insisted.

"No, but it's business. Minza, there's no foolishness about me. I am in dead earnest. You're my only hope in life; will you be my wife? That rhymes, although such was not my intention. It's not a great distinction, but then—" and his voice died away, as if in thought.

There was nothing impulsive about it, and it was, I fear, chiefly the memory of Tim's defiant look that decided me.

"Yes," I said, and he kissed me without urther argument.

Of course it was not such a courtship as I had dreamed of, but I knew that Robert loved his mother, was kind, pure and noble in heart, and I gave him my hand while still wounded by the loss of my boy lover.

"You make me so happy, Minza," he said, and even then I felt that he deserved a stronger love than I could bestow upon him. I have no excuses to offer, but be sure that all such errors and failures in the service of love bring their own avenging.

Father and mother arrived earlier than I had expected, right in the middle of my preparations to welcome them. What a happy meeting! I hugged mother and little Tod till they fairly gasped, and father looked so ruddy and strong! Mother, bless her heart, was young again. There was the old love-sparkle in her eyes, the dimples had come once more into her cheek, and we were very happy that night! Little Tod had grown as tall as Jimmy and was as saucy as a parrot.

That evening was a happy one as the reunited family gathered around the center table and talked of their several experiences at home

and abroad. We had French bonbons, English biscuits, and East Indian sweetmeats sent us by our English relations and purchased by father, whose face glowed with new hope and animation. I played and sang as he gathered the boys in his strong arms, and mother, too, sang many of her old songs.

"There, Meggie, is Helen Martin when a lonely young Englishman fell in love with her," father remarked, looking at her fondly.

"Oh, the hallowed glow of a happy heart!
Nor wealth nor fame can banish its lustre."

Such a busy time mother and I had talking! She told me of Paris, of the Crystal Palace, of Covent Garden, and inspired me still further with that great ambition which I could never resist—to be a prima donna.

Her trunk was full of little presents for us all, and a generous supply of guidebooks, photos and souvenirs. The pension arrears was almost wholly spent, and we were still one thousand dollars in debt, but father and mother had taken a new lease of life and we were happy.

Mother was soon actively at work organizing new music classes, and having "been abroad," pupils poured in upon her.

"Now, my Minza must study to go abroad, too," said mother enthusiastically one day.

"No, mother," I demurred, "you must not sacrifice yourself for me. You have done too much for me already."

"But, my child, your voice, when cultivated, will bring you fortune and fame."

"I want neither, now we are happy; besides —besides—I'm—I'm—going to be married!"

"Minza!" gasped mother, "you do not mean it. O Minza! how could you do it, and not let me know? Cannot it be—"

"Mamma, it is settled," I replied.

Father came in just then, having overheard our conversation. He seemed unable to believe his own ears. "My little girl, only seventeen, and talking of being married!"

"Who can it be, then?" said mother, almost harshly. "It cannot be Fred Burroughes, for he is too old to fall in love with a child like you."

"No, mother, it's Robert Burnette, the dearest, best fellow on earth. You'll love him,

and he'll soon pay that one thousand dollars," I continued, trying to be enthusiastic over my approaching marriage.

"My daughter," demanded mother sternly, "have you sold yourself again for us?"

"Oh, no, you'll like Bob, mother; in fact, you must like him."

But she never did. He had carried off her only daughter and disappointed the dearest hopes of her life, and to the day of her death she never really forgave him.

Bob called soon after and father tried to be cheerful and entertaining as became a prospective father-in-law; mother was cold and reserved, but she never remonstrated with me again.

Poor Bob! I saw he felt his ostracism, and I pitied him the more, and admired his manly ways, for he was a splendid type of pure manhood, and that is saying a great deal in these days, when so many young men, "after sowing their wild oats," finish by marrying innocent and ignorant girls.

We were busy with the preparations for the wedding, for he had established his newspaper

in Dakota, and we were to be married in October and go there to live.

It was a hard trial to mother, to give up her daughter, just when she was beginning to find so much comfort in our companionship. I could scarcely believe it to be true. A girl about to be married has to meet untried the great problems of her life and destiny.

We were to be wedded in the village church, and the night before I wandered down to the old limekiln. The leaves were falling; the autumn foliage enveloped the trees I loved so well. It was now a real farewell. I came to them as a girl—tomorrow I stepped into wifehood.

Robert met me at the gate when I returned.

"What, pet! so sad before your wedding day?"

"Yes, you do not know what a girl gives up when she is married, and—"

"Minza," he said, his honest eyes looking deeply into mine, "I will not take you captive. I love you—my life is yours—married or not married. We were born for each other."

Oh, why didn't he rage, and fume, and fight, as heroes do on the stage or in story-books,

when they are in love? It was his sterling perfection that annoyed me—but his honest, warm heart was so true!

Our minister, the Reverend Mr. Frazer, came from a distant "charge" to marry us. The ceremony was short, and our clasped hands trembled as the final words were pronounced. To me the "Wedding March," played as we walked out of the church, seemed rather like a funeral dirge.

At the wedding supper everyone seemed sad. Mother's eyes were red, and she could scarcely speak, for mother and daughter were drifting —drifting apart at last and forever.

At the little station the platform was thronged with friends to see us off; the train was an hour late, which made it rather awkward for me. "Will it never come?" I thought, as a curious crowd pushed forward to "see the bride."

Neither Tim nor Angela was there, though they had stood in the back part of the church during the ceremony; the friend of my childhood and my first boyish sweetheart! and yet no farewell from either!

A shower of rice and old shoes made the occupants of the car "sit up and take notice" as we entered.

"Now, we won't act like a bridal couple, will we, Robert?" I whispered.

"No," he said heroically, trying to look as unconcerned as an old married man. But it did not last long. I soon fell asleep, with my head on his shoulder, dreaming of those dear ones at home.

Our brief honeymoon was chiefly spent on hurrying trains and in crowded hotels, for Robert had sundry preparations and purchases to make before settling down for the long and almost Arctic Dakotan winter in the Red River Valley. My husband was always considerate, kind, and generous to a fault, and I am sure loved me alone of all the world. He was ambitious, untiring and full of that almost tropical enthusiasm with which the pioneers of Dakota belittled the disadvantages and apotheosized the beauties and glories of a fertile, treeless, wind-swept and monotonous ocean of rolling prairie.

CHAPTER XVI

Our Pioneer Life

IN ordinary romances, the marriage of the pair is the climax, and "they lived happily ever after." In my life marriage was the real beginning of life, and I found myself abruptly transported from the humdrum routine and settled conditions of Iowan village life into the feverish extravagances and energies of Dakotan settlement and development.

We arrived at Fargo, Dakota, during a light snowfall, with the wind whistling dismal interludes about the car. The landscape was dreary, and made me feel homesick, but Bob's cheeriness was irresistible, and we met many of his acquaintances, who were always heavily and sometimes shabbily dressed, but were invariably full of enthusiastic commendations of his own section of newly-surveyed government land, or certain that his "town site," principally represented by a neat blueprint of a scientifically plotted quarter, half or whole

section, would more than warrant extensive investment. They sold them, too, in innumerable cases, where there was nothing but a way station, a wheat elevator and a few makeshift shanty offices and stores, to represent the hotels, churches, schools, engine houses, public parks and other figments of the promoter's imagination duly set down on his neatly folded "plot."

It was not unfitting that Bob himself innocently spoke of his "plot" and the "plotting" thereof, for very few of the original investors in many of these budding cities ever got their money back.

We traveled up the broad Red River Valley, dotted with shanties on each quarter section of land, and stacks of grain which looked like Esquimaux snow-houses. We stopped at many straggling and almost deserted little stations, where elevators and grain warehouses clustered about hungry-looking lumber and coal yards, and at last arrived at Boomtown. There were three or four handsome brick buildings and a large hotel in the village. Our office sign, "The Weekly Times," blazed out in bright gold

letters from a neat-looking little wooden shanty. We drove there first. It was not an inspiring sight. A yellow-haired Swedish boy with an ink-smeared face sat perched on a stool, "throwing in" type. The old Washington hand-press, with its ponderous lever, stood in one corner, with the gravestone ink-slab at the side. All the walls were frescoed with inky finger-daubs, and decorated with faded circus lithographs with extravagant "date lines."

There was a frightful odor of benzine about the room, and the old job presses looked as if they were hungry for a form to keep them busy.

The residents of Boomtown were an unusually intelligent and bright class of people and gave us a very cordial welcome. The burden of conversation, day and night, was "Boomtown's great future—when the new railroad arrived."

Bob showed me the flaming maps indicating Boomtown as quite the center of the universe, and in our fancy a glorious future was painted for us and for the benefit of the numerous "settlers" whom we hoped we could induce to settle among us in what was then euphoniously

termed the "banana belt" of "the golden Northwest."

The wild blizzards, raging that winter for days at a time, made our life rather dreary and lonesome; but I soon became quite an accomplished editor's wife, addressing "single" wrappers for the papers on publication days, mixing the paste, and picking up the local current gossip, as follows:

"Mrs. Mayor Snodgrass drove out yesterday with Mrs. Biff."

"Mrs. Jones went to Babtown in the afternoon, and was accompanied by Hon. Fillipers Jones."

"Miss Sally Stiggins has a bad felon on her left hand."

"Mr. Joe Waterbury has been under the weather a few days this week."

Do you laugh at this as trivial? It is much the same news as the London papers give concerning royalty. In America, the people are the royalty, and each little country paper has its court of patrons to look after, and no town, hamlet or neighborhood is without its society.

It was not all hopeful endurance of extreme

cold and driving *ponderie*, as the half-breeds called the impalpable snow-dust that almost stifled one at times; and indeed did every winter claim its death-toll of the lives of men and animals. Even the still Arctic days were beautiful when the sun rose up in the east and spangled the furled snowdrifts and faceted weeds and grasses with diamonds, rubies, sapphires and chrysophrase in countless numbers, and unrivalled magnificence of colored rays.

Then as the day wore on we walked, skated, coasted and went sleighing, much the same as we would have done in Iowa, except that buffalo and astrachan coats and fur caps were quite as much in request for women as for men, as were thick German socks and Arctic overshoes, for a "Dakota zephyr" in winter pierces through a pilot's cloth cloak as if it were flimsy silk, and the radiant health enjoyed by most of us needed conservation when the thermometer just inside the storm-doors registered thirty to forty below zero.

Then as the sunset drew near there were sometimes magnificent solar rainbows; strange

displays in which the descending sun became the center of an arc or circle of dazzling light, embellished on either side and sometimes above, with a somewhat less radiant but perfect duplicate of the great luminary.

At night the same utter calm often prevailed in periods of intense cold, and the full moon illumined the whole landscape for miles away. The lofty zenith studded with stars sometimes exhibited an immense ring of light met by another surrounding the moon, herself duplicated by "lunar rainbows," iridescent orbs of deeper radiance. At other times the Aurora Borealis, the mystical "Northern Lights" of sea rover and trapper, and the "death-dance of the spirits" of Indian folk-lore would fill the heavens with strange bands and masses of steady or shimmering light, or a *melange* of many-colored advancing, retreating and eddying shapes, which, indeed, required little imagination to metamorphose into a distant cloud of martial warriors painted for war, feather-draped and plume-bonneted, and silently performing these ancient solemnities in the distant spirit-land.

Sometimes the men hunted, for the gray "timber wolf," coyote, fox, badger and "Jack-rabbit" or "great American hare" still haunted the sparse woods and unsettled bluffs and marshes; beaver, mink, otter and muskrat were trapped and shot and with spear and line the fisherman secured ample catches of pickerel, suckers, perch and bass.

The spring was welcomed and yet dreaded, for the Red River of the North has its outlet closed with ice when its southern source is open, and swollen by vernal rains and melting snows, and great masses of ice borne northward on its murky eddies form massive and lofty dams that turn immense areas of the Red River Valley into that enormous lake which wise men say was its permanent form aeons ago. Then, as in the valley of the Nile, we beheld a great inland sea, out of which farmstead, straw stack and village rose like the islets and temples of ancient Khern, and men paddled about in home-made batteaux and hunted big frogs on the plank sidewalks of the village streets.

But whether cold or wet, pleasant or stormy,

the social life of Boomtown was democratic and genial beyond all praise. When the Methodists started in to build the first church, Protestants of every creed, devout Catholics, cynical agnostics, barkeepers and gamblers, all "chipped in" to aid in building "the first church in Boomtown," and when the Presbyterians, Baptists and Catholics essayed like enterprises, all men helped to their best ability.

"Everything goes" was the general watchword of that era, and within certain limitations it was true, but the license which defied the law and broke the bounds of order, seldom went long unchecked. Robbery and assaults on women were almost unknown, although many women, young and old, spent night after night alone upon their claims, in "shanties" which any man might pull apart with his hands. Perhaps it was largely due to this fact that a revolver was usually the "bosom friend" of each land-holder.

Our evenings were often spent at lyceums and lectures; impromptu balls frequently brought together twenty or thirty couples to dance to the music of piano and violin; and

"calling," which varied from the exact and polite verbiage of an eastern expert, to the rhythmic singing of a Missouri Pike with his jean pants tucked into cowhide boots, whose version of "Swing your partners" was chanted out in a soft, Southern drawling climax: "An' then yer honeys swing."

The most prosperous person in town was the widow of a half-breed, who had built his cabin forty years before on land which was now a part of the original town site. One of the poorest had been an eastern oil distiller, who had defied the power of the great trust, and in his old age, cheery and hopeful, was a real estate and land agent, and not without some prospect of retrieving his shattered fortune.

The chief crop raised in Dakota was not wheat, but politics. The long winter evenings spent by the men hugging red-hot stoves are certain to breed mischief. The lone settler on the dreary plains!—God help his poor wife! No wonder the insane asylums are filled with patients described as "only a farmer's wife." The tedious monotony of their existence is certainly little better than prison life, and

accounts for much of the discontent among American farmers, who along the line of the Northern Pacific at least were especially isolated by the land grants and school apportionments. For, as all men once knew, Congress granted to the promoters of the Northern Pacific every other section (square mile) of land along its whole route for twenty miles north and south of its right of way, equal to a solid belt twenty miles broad from the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean. Later another grant of twenty miles more on each side was voted, and the railroad claiming to have lost some land through the machinations of "squatters," an indemnity grant of ten miles more was given away and has apparently all been allotted to the Northern Pacific. In Europe the farmers cluster in villages, and social and public diversions and the little gossip and scandal of their simple life alleviate the monotony of their existence and make them more contented.

In the early days of its first settlement, Boomtown had been located at the county seat of Halkins County. Since then a second

large railroad corporation had extended a branch of its line into the southern part of the county, and located there a terminal town-site, which was owned by officials of the railroad. Subsidiary corporations and interlocking schemes, with their inflated watered stock bubbles, account for many of the large fortunes gathered so quickly by American railroad magnates.

The new town of Courtville was named after one of the magnates, and it aspired to take the county seat away from Boomtown. A flaw was discovered in the first proceedings in establishing the county seat, and a fight was made in the legislature at Bismarck to have a special law passed to re-submit the matter to a vote of the people. The railroad corporation in extending its line could import enough sovereign American voters—that is, the large army of foreigners who were the railroad laborers, and only temporary residents—to carry the election and secure the county seat.

Boomtown was aroused, and as Bob was looked upon as a leader in public matters, we were to go to Bismarck to try and defeat

this infamous legislation. After we arrived, Bob made a careful poll of the members of the legislature, in order to learn who were for and who were against the scheme. He found the railroad represented by a powerful and wealthy lobby, but excited some generous members in opposition; while I tried to assist by influencing the legislators at the Governor's receptions; but women did not then wield at American capitals the power that they had in France in the days of the Bourbons.

Champagne suppers were given by the railroad lobby, and each side competed for every doubtful vote. The critical time was drawing near. Bob canvassed his voters every day, and found there were two majority on our side against the bill. On the day for the final voting, I went to the State House through a blinding blizzard and sat in the galleries, almost the only woman present.

"If we can keep our men in line, we are all right," said Bob excitedly.

The "ayes" and "nays" were called. There was a breathless silence. I was about to leave—satisfied that Boomtown was victorious—when

I saw two of our men slip quietly out at a side door. I rushed down into the corridor, and in the dark corners saw the portly lobbyist, Colonel Malsey, who represented the railroad, hand both men a roll suspiciously like bank-notes. They quietly stole back to their seats, but the lobbyist never appeared in the hall. The names of these two were reached near the end of the roll-call.

"Yea," responded one.

"Yea," echoed the other.

Boomtown was defeated by its own neighbors—representatives from an adjoining county.

The Boomtown men cried "Bribery!" An investigation was ordered, and Colonel Malsey was implicated, but he proved an *alibi* by seven reputable witnesses that he had not been near the State House on the day the vote was taken.

I knew he lied, but what was a woman's word against seven "reputable witnesses"? I never told Bob about seeing Colonel Malsey, and was very happy when we left Bismarck that night.

The election occurred the following autumn.

Bob traveled miles and miles over the prairie country in a "buckboard" behind broncho ponies. He visited each voter personally, and sometimes, I am afraid, like the opposing side, he gave them a taste from his bottle of "cold tea." Meantime I remained in the office editing the paper and facing irate readers whom Bob had "blistered" in the previous issue. It was an exciting time. The outlook was bright for Boomtown, as it was more centrally situated in the county than Courtville.

Election day approached, and never can I forget how pale and wan Bob looked when the fatal day dawned. He owned an interest in the Boomtown townsite, and it was a battle for his home and all that he possessed. He mortgaged the printing office to raise money for the campaign. The organization was thought to be perfect, as Boomtown men were stationed at every polling precinct on the day of election to watch the enemy and our interests.

The returns came in slowly that night, but we felt that victory was certain to be ours. It was at Courtville itself, with its alien railroad voters, that the foe was most feared; but they

had been checked by the Boomtown challengers. Everyone was gleeful, and Bob was cheered as he delivered an address from the front of his office on a farmer's wagon. Bonfires were lighted in the streets, and it was altogether a night of rejoicing, as the result had been received from every precinct except the Waney district in the extreme north part of the county, which was, of course, supposed to have given an almost solid vote for Boomtown.

In the midst of the rejoicing a courier arrived from the Waney district.

"One hundred and four against us!"

This, if true, turned the scale. The news soon flashed over the village. The alien railroad voters had been quietly sent armed in squads to that precinct—a flank movement —and the Boomtown challengers had been bribed.

"Contest it!" "Hang the traitors!" were the cries on the street.

Well, it was contested in the courts on the ground of unconstitutional legislation, and writs of injunction and mandamus were issued from the District Court fifty odd miles away,

but the Courtville men came up armed and in overwhelming numbers to remove the records from the court house. Sheriff Stollard had received a telegram from the district judge directing him to serve the writs already on the way.

The sheriff summoned an armed posse, who held the courthouse when the Courtville men, led by one of the county commissioners, demanded the keys and the records. Stollard objected and remonstrated, but violence was threatened, and like the man who did not care to declare in favor of heaven and against hell, he "had friends in both places," and had no disposition to risk his precious hide, although the Boomtown men with guns and revolvers could have held the court house until the writs arrived on the next train.

So the doors were flung open and the Courtville gang poured in armed, jubilant, triumphant. They had to saw out the door jambs to remove the great desks and big safes, but at last they looted the Courthouse and carried their booty to temporary quarters at Courtville. The writs came in and the stuff had to be brought

back again, but the Boomtown case was poorly presented, and all the money and influence was on the other side. Boomtown was ruined, and Bob had lost everything in the contest.

It was a paralyzing blow to poor Bob, but he made the best of a ruinous defeat. "There is one consolation, Minza," he said.

"And what's that, dear?"

"I sent your father the one thousand dollars first. He's out of debt."

"O Bob! you darling, you've ruined yourself for them!"

"No, no, a young man is never ruined by reverses while he has health."

The office and plant of the *Weekly Times* was sold under a foreclosed mortgage, and we sought new fields of labor and another home.

The wind howled dismally the night we left. It was in December, and our friends at Boomtown—for misfortune reveals your true friends—bade us Godspeed. We started for a new "city" on Lake Superior that was booming.

Now Bob found in me a helpmate, if ever there was one; but where husband and wife labor together in the same business or trade

there is bound to be a clash at times. I must confess it, although I had promised to "obey" him, yet there were times when I thought he could follow my advice with better grace. After a little quiet cry the domestic sky would clear, but "It's just such snivelling as this that drives men to the bad and makes them seek other companionship and drink," was Robert's standard argument.

After all, I look back on my first years of married life in Dakota as happy, although it ended in reverses and was fraught with rugged experience.

CHAPTER XVII

The Rift in the Lute

IT was with some misgivings that Robert and I took up our abode at another "growing town." The "boom eras" in America are spasmodic and travel in waves. They are the crises of the speculative fever that has always been characteristic of American settlement and development.

The evolution of a Western American town is an interesting study. First, the town plot and the corner lot speculation, before the least indication of a building is visible; then some great factory, railroad shops, or industrial interests center there, about which a large city is to "grow." The building operations start on a given day, rough board shanties springing up like magic over night. Then comes the struggle to determine the "business portion" of the new town. Rival districts put up large buildings as magnets to attract the building operations of genuine settlers and business

men. Next follow the churches, and even these sacred structures are provided with locations by the real estate dealer, who knows that it is real estate "lent to the Lord" at a high rate of usurious interest.

Municipal organizations, streets, sidewalks, sewers, water supply and paving are the succeeding problems in the evolution. Later the wooden shanties give way to brick "blocks," and a spirit of "bigger and better" rivalry begins, until the town becomes a "city," and boasts of parks and a "fine opera house," palatial schoolhouses and court houses, a Board of Trade and "boodle" aldermen.

Town politics sometimes fall into the hands of the rougher element, who, through "public contracts" and winked-at privileges, strengthen themselves into a ring; and a mimic Tammany Hall is originated in every growing American town which holds the balance of power between the principal political parties.

At Dunbar, our new home, Bob secured a situation as city editor on a daily newspaper. In a sharp and bitter local political struggle between factions of the same party one side

desired to start a newspaper as their "organ," with Bob as editor. They made up a liberal subscription as a bonus, and in a short time the new paper was launched.

"Well, Minza, I have a daily newspaper now," said Bob one day.

This was the first intimation I had received of Bob's ambitions in that direction.

"And are you sure another paper will pay?"

"Pay!" he replied. "I have everything to gain, and I'm a Dakota fighter."

I assisted every day at the office, Bob filling the positions of editor, business manager, compositor, foreman, reporter and proofreader on the struggling new paper. It was a tremendous strain on him; he was hardly civil to me, so absorbed was he in his business. I became more an *employe* than a wife. The change in him had come on gradually since our reverses in Dakota.

Dunbar, besides being a growing and prosperous manufacturing center, was also a famous resort for tourists. The trout fishing and hunting in the "forests primeval" were great attractions. Among the tourists who visited

the large hotel "Minnehaha" every summer was one Henry Orglive, a prominent theatrical manager. Bob had received a large order from him for printing, and had urged him to visit our home.

"Minza, do be more sociable with my friends. It's business, you know. Brush up your music and sing for him."

Mr. Orglive took tea with us the following week. He was a tall, handsome man with a heavy moustache. After tea I played and sang. He accompanied me in my violin selections, and we were naturally drawn together by a common taste for good music. I was hungry for appreciation of the art in which I had been nursed from earliest childhood.

Bob sat in a corner and nodded, for his musical taste had not improved since our marriage, although I had done my best to educate him.

We continued to play until late, and in parting Mr. Orglive's admiration and sympathy in my musical tastes had made a most favorable impression.

"I have enjoyed the evening very much, Mr. Burnette, and shall want to come again,"

said Mr. Orglive to Bob as he was leaving. "Mrs. Burnette is a charming musician."

"Glad to hear it—glad to hear it," said Bob rather sleepily as he showed him to the door.

When Bob returned to the room he glowered upon me with the ferocity of a wild beast.

"You thought I was asleep, but I wasn't."

"What is it, Robert?" I asked innocently.

"Oh, you know," he retorted, "you needn't look so innocent."

This roused my temper. I put the piano cover down with a bang and blew out the light.

That made him furious, and here was

"The little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening, slowly silence all."

The incidents of this night and Bob's anger created in me an admiration for Mr. Orglive which, had I been informed by Robert of Mr. Orglive's real character as a "lady-killer," I should never have entertained for a moment. I thought that Bob was needlessly and foolishly jealous, after requiring me to entertain a

gentleman whose good opinion and business favors he had wished to cultivate.

The new hotel was opened a fortnight later with a grand ball, and Robert insisted that I should be present and look my best. "It's a matter of business, so be careful how you act," he said, as he brought me some beautiful flowers for my corsage.

Poor fellow, I thought his mind must be giving way under the strain of business anxieties. I did not know what to say or do, and I kept back the tears from my eyes with difficulty.

My silence irritated him. We drove to the ball, and as I came out of the dressing-room I met Mr. Orglive.

"So charmed to see you, Mrs. Burnette. I've rather taken charge of affairs tonight. seeing that I am a stockholder in this new hotel, and you're to sing for us."

"But I've no music," I replied.

"I have," he said quickly. "I bought those pieces you sang for me the other evening. I never can forget—"

Just then Bob came up, and his face was

fairly livid. "Don't you sing tonight, or you will regret it," he said under his breath, but I saw that several overheard or comprehended him.

"I will," I replied defiantly. "I can't refuse without exciting remark, and you yourself have brought me here, although I did not care to come. Now you can take me home at once, if you choose, or I shall feel free to act as any other lady guest would do under the circumstances. Shall we go home?"

"No," he replied brusquely, "but don't dare to sing for that man."

Afraid of making a scene, I hurried away and joined my friends, who chatted merrily over the new hotel and the delightful arrangements for our comfort and pleasure.

My songs were announced after the first lancers, and I did not dance, so as to save my breath. Mr. Orglive presided at the piano, and his accompaniment was sympathetic and masterly. The whole past seemed to come back, and passionately and defiantly I sang the songs he handed me. I had not sung before a Dunbar audience previous to this, and it created something of a sensation.

"Is that Mrs. Burnette?" "Really now, what a beautiful singer!" were the whispered remarks I overheard as I took my seat.

Congratulations were pouring in when Mr. Orglive gave me his arm and escorted me from the concert hall.

In a corner of the cloak room Robert was crouching like a tiger. Of course everyone must have noticed him, and I went to him at once.

"Will you take me home?" I whispered.

"No," he hissed, rather than spoke, and Mr. Orglive at the door must have overheard him.

"May I have this waltz?" said Mr. Orglive, advancing as the music was resumed.

I hesitated. I had not danced since our marriage, and with a desperate shrug I answered "Yes."

That waltz was divine, a revelation. How my partner's courtesy shamed my husband's rudeness. We glided over the perfectly waxed floor as in the fascination of a dream. I went back to Bob, who still sat sulking by himself.

"Take me home, Robert," I said.

He arose drowsily, as if bored, and went to the cloakroom. While I was waiting for him in the corridor, Mr. Orglive came out of the dancing-room, wiping the perspiration from his brow. He had been through a vigorous polka with Mrs. Goundy, who was very stout.

"Your voice is divine, Mrs. Burnette," he said enthusiastically.

Bob heard him as he came out of the cloakroom, and the two men glared at each other a minute and parted stiffly. How miserable I was after it all! Scarcely a word was spoken between us on the way home. I took off my ball dress and sat by the open grate praying—praying to God. A miserable, unhappy, girl wife!

Matters did not mend, and it seemed as if the rift was widening and we were drifting farther and farther apart. Bob would remain out late at night and I feared further trouble, he was so completely unlike his old self. His whole thoughts were given to making money.

One evening he came home to dinner in a rather more cheerful frame of mind than usual. I was surprised. But it was with a sarcastic laugh and cynical smile that he greeted me:

"Now you'll want a symphony orchestra instead of a grand piano," and he threw down a large yellow envelope. "Read it," he continued.

I did so mechanically. It was a letter from a New York firm of lawyers. One sentence was enough.

"Your claim to the one hundred thousand dollars from the Ferguson estate in Scotland is established."

"You're to be congratulated," I said rather languidly, for neither money nor success seemed to compensate for his aversion and neglect.

"So that's the way my years of struggle and work are received? Damn a woman, anyhow! I'll go back to airships."

I should have been more patient, but my temper again got the better of me.

"Keep your money!—I don't want it; I'm going home," I said angrily. "I didn't marry you for money, and I'm going back to those who love me."

This seemed to sober him.

"Minza, don't be mad," he cried coaxingly, coming toward me. "Think of the scandal."

"I have decided," I said firmly. "Better even that than to live in torture."

It looked for a time as if there might be a reconciliation, but I was adamant, and Robert, alas, was not himself, and I did not know it.

"Well, Minza, I am now an aeronaut, and I'll soar—soar—then you'll want to see me, I guess," he growled as he left the room.

This last remark revealed what I had before half suspected. Was Bob's mind affected? It was a terrible thought, and I did not dare to breathe a word of my suspicions, for the gossips would say I wanted to deprive him of his fortune. Ordinarily he seemed rational enough; but now all this talk of airships had an ominous significance.

It was announced in the paper the next day that I was to visit my home in Iowa. Bob sold the newspaper soon after, and was deluged on all sides with advice as to how to invest his money. How many moth-like friends the possession of wealth will bring! They found out his pet hobby and weakness—airships!

Neither of us seemed to realize that it might be a final separation. I now had no power

or influence with him. He sent money to the Smithville bank to my credit and gave me a purse when we parted. It was like kissing a dead person when I bade him "good-bye." I tried to confide my fears as to his sanity to some friends, but they were all suspicious, and thought I wanted his fortune "to lead an artist's life."

I felt a little regret at leaving Dunbar. The beautiful bay, which was an arm of Lake Superior, was placid and serene; the large pine, spruce and hemlock trees making a rich purple horizon fringe on the opposite shore. This little group of islands glistened like emeralds upon its bosom as the city faded from view. Even the scattered stumps and red, mucky clay seemed to add artistic beauty to the scene. Then we passed into the burned district whose dismal landscape of burnt pine-stumps and log clearings indicated the fury of forest fires in which many a poor settler had lost his life.

And then the factory whistles sounded in chorus that echoed among the hills a long, dolorous minor chord.

Of course people would talk, but let them

talk! My whole life had been more or less a matter of public discussion, but during the night on the Pullman sleeping car I restlessly dreamed of Robert and his airships and of lofty ascents in which he soared away from me forever.

CHAPTER XVIII

At Home Again

WHILE I did not intend that my separation from Robert should be permanent, I felt that the unexpected acquisition of so much money was a strain on his mind, already overworked, and liable to break down at any time. I felt it my duty to cling to him, but thought that a temporary separation would give us both time to recover from our estrangement and to remember and resume our duties toward each other. Had it not been for the money that unsettled his reason, it would have been an easier task.

What a return home it was! I felt something of a prodigal. The letters from Smithville had been rather irregular and had been growing more formal; but when I saw the dear old house with green blinds nestling amid the trees and flowers, I felt that one thing had been accomplished—we were not one thousand dollars in debt—and this brought back a tender mem-

ory of Bob's generosity. Was I not really an ungrateful creature?

I expected to find poverty and sadness in the old home, but there was peace, plenty and happiness. It seemed as if I was quite unnecessary to the comfort of the family I had left in comparative poverty.

There was no lack of love or tenderness, however, in the greetings that welcomed me back to the dear old home.

"Minza, Minza, my child!" cried mother as she rushed out.

Father came in from the garden. Jimmy gave me a real young brother's hug and Tod waved his Fourth of July flag in exultation.

Yes, they were glad to see me, and how my hungry, love-famished heart leaped for joy! There is always a feeling of refuge at home—there the envies and jealousies of life cannot intrude. At mother's knee I sat as I did when a child and told her all between my sobs.

"My dear, dear Minza! why didn't you write to me?"

"I couldn't, mother; my secret sorrows seemed as sacred to me as my prayers."

"Well, dear, you are home now; let's forget it all. You know I trembled for my daughter even when we heard of your prosperity. You decided too hastily, and I always thought if we had not gone to Europe I should have saved you the hasty and fatal step."

"But, mother, Bob was good as long as—" I broke down again.

"Yes, perhaps the poor fellow overtaxed his brain, and it may come out all right yet. Let us have some tea and music."

Her cheerfulness was infectious, and we were soon singing the old duets.

As I received letters regularly with money from Bob, there was little talk in the village, but when my stay lengthened out into months, and he never came to visit me, a ripple of curiosity ran through the neighborhood.

I tried to get my husband to pay a visit to Smithville, or to join me in a tour down the Mississippi, or to the Atlantic Coast, but he was at first "too busy," and later was called home by the serious illness of his widowed mother. In the autumn I received the following note, dated at Shelbyville:

"Dear Minza,—Mother died Friday and was buried this morning; there is nothing for me to live for now. I am going to Europe next week to cross the Alps in my new balloon, which I have named after you. We have organized a scientific expedition. I may meet you in heaven. Good-bye. BOB."

There was no doubt of it now. He had lost his mind. I decided to go to Shelbyville that night. I thought my duty as a wife demanded it and determined to go with him.

As I was just about to board the train a telegram was handed me from New York:

"I sail tomorrow; you cannot go. Your heart is too heavy for the balloon. BOB."

With all the cunning of a madman he seemed to have divined my purpose. I tried to intercept him with a telegram to the authorities in New York, but even they, after an examination, permitted him to sail, and evidently thought me a scheming wife, eager only for his money. The letter I received later stated:

"Dear Madam,—I take pleasure in stating that Robert Burnette is of sound mind, and no more insane than any of our eminent scien-

tists and investigators, and that the trip will not only add valuable truths to science, but improve his health as well.

J. M. BARTLETT, M. D."

I watched eagerly for the safe arrival of the steamer. Later I received long, interesting and affectionate letters from Bob, but the balloon always came first. He was generous in his allowances of money, but the old jealousy cropped out at times, as when he wrote:

"But I shall not send you too much money at one time, as you might run away in another man's balloon."

Some months had elapsed when I received a letter from him announcing a great aerial voyage he was to undertake that day in his new airship. His fortune must have dwindled under the enormous expense of his aerial expeditions, but he was always hopeful.

"When I visit Mars and return, we'll go there to live, Minza. The new ship is a beauty."

He was to make his great ascent on my birthday. How eagerly I watched the cablegrams in the papers! The event attracted world-wide attention as a noble self-sacrifice

for science. The balloon ascended with my husband.

"The great airship 'Minza' faded away into the merest speck and seemed to sink into the blue sea of the skies," read the graphic account. This was the last I heard of poor Bob. Whether I was now a widow or a wife—I knew not.

Of course I naturally supposed that his will was made, and that there would be no trouble about the property if there was any left, but I was mistaken. Bob had disappeared in a foreign country, and as the authorities had no positive evidence of his death, they refused to probate a wife's claim to his money. Even the life insurance companies refused to pay the indemnity. There was indeed no proof of death. If I was indeed still a wife I had in verity "a husband in the air."

CHAPTER XIX

My Success as a Soloist

ONCE again I was confronted with the problem of earning a living. I could not allow mother or father to support me. Mother again appealed to my old ambition.

"Take your money and study for the stage, Minza. You are growing beautiful, my dear," said she, "and your early training will not come amiss," and after another of those old-time family consultations, mother's advice prevailed.

In another week I was to leave for Boston and resume my musical studies. My life's mission then began in earnest, although every day I expected some tidings from the lost aeronaut.

The day before I was to start I felt dizzy, and the reaction brought me down. Dr. Waddington was called, and mother soon had me in bed. The old doctor felt my cheek, took my temperature and counted my pulse.

"Hum, hum—typhoid fever," he said, in as matter-of-fact a way as if it had been the mumps. That was the last natural thing I remembered; then I seemed to be with Bob on his Alpine expeditions.

At last one night the great airship grazed a jutting crag, and I stepped quickly aboard. Bob met me with the old love light in his eyes, but there was a quieter and deeper tenderness than I had seen for many a day. "My wife," he said gently and caught me in his arms.

"My husband!" I said brokenly, "can you ever forgive me?" and I broke into a passion of tears, but his kisses were on my brow and they were happy tears, for I knew that he had always loved me and now loved me even more deeply at last.

We floated upward, up higher and higher into the golden radiance that gilded the loftier glaciers, and Bob's voice fell through the Alpine silence like silver bells. "We are both forgiven," he said, "for those who love are shrived before confession. Remember, Minza, I have loved you always, love you still, and shall love you forever."

Then I seemed again to near the gates of pearl, but all at once I was sinking, sinking—and I awoke refreshed, but with my eyes strangely wet with tears, and somehow I felt that in that dream Robert and I had met and had parted, forgiving and forgiven.

"Poor little Minza—a wife or a widow?" was the first thing I remember mother saying. They thought I had sung my last song.

Naturally my illness interfered with my plans for the future, but as soon as I was convalescent I began to map out my campaign. Getting well was a tedious business, but somehow time wheels around the days and months just as regularly at one season as another. The fear of losing my voice proved groundless—in fact, it seemed to strengthen and improve; but my red hair all came out and left me quite bald. It soon grew again, although I left for Boston with a flowing blonde wig.

As I entered the train I saw a familiar form stooping under the weight of heavy valises. It was Fred Burroughes. He did not recognize me, but I spoke to him and he looked up in surprise.

"What—Minza! Why! where are you going?"

We got on the train together and I told him my story.

Of course this incident gave Smithville a rare piece of gossip, and mother was enlightened with the information that I had eloped with Fred Burroughes, my first benefactor.

His mother had died recently, and he, too, had been ill for nearly a year past, as his pale face indicated.

We were in the middle of an interesting conversation when he abruptly rose.

"I must get off here, Minza," he said with a sad look in his eyes. "Oh, if I could only help you—"

"Hush, Fred, it is I who should help you now. Write to me, will you?"

"Minza, I'm married. This is my home, and—"

"All aboard!" shouted the burly conductor, and the rest of Fred's words were lost in the roar of the train.

Thus friends drift apart in absence, and old acquaintances give place to new associations. Poor Fred! Was his life as unhappy as mine?

When back in Boston again all seemed familiar to me, and under my old teacher, Professor Windemere, I plunged into my musical studies. He remembered every weakness and peculiarity of my early singing, and gave them special attention. When I announced my determination to study opera, he shook his head doubtfully.

"Your voice is too weak—not full enough for the great opera houses; and then you'll have to learn to act. No, Minza, I don't want you to chase a false hope. Study to be a teacher and rest content."

"My mother said I was to be a prima donna," I replied decidedly, "and I'm going to aim for that."

"All right, my dear, but remember the warning I gave you."

My means were limited, and to secure additional instruction in stage work I accepted a position in the cloak department of a large department store, where I came in contact with wealthy women customers. It brought me a steady income, and I continued to work for some time; but at the end of the year I found

my funds almost entirely exhausted except for the little savings sent me by mother and the small salary from the store.

I made application to sing the solo parts in "The Creation" at the coming May Festival. It was audacious in me, but the conductor, having had the usual trouble with rival prima donnas, accepted me in defiance of both the recalcitrant soloists.

An unknown soloist! The public were on the *qui vive.* I rehearsed hours and hours with the conductor, and he finally expressed himself rather reluctantly as "pleased" with his newly discovered soprano.

The day of the festival arrived. The choruses of Haydn never before seemed so heaven-inspired. My voice acted rather poorly at first, but when I came to the passage wherein the cooing of a dove is imitated, I threw my whole soul into the effort to express the soft love notes of the snow-white bird, which I could almost feel hovering near me.

The effect was electrical. The people applauded with one solid cheer, for my simple and truthful rendition of the passage had

touched the responsive chord in all that great audience.

The entire oratorio was rendered with splendid expression, and the conductor was showered with congratulations. He pushed his way through the singers to where I was surrounded by admiring acquaintances. His shining, bald head seemed to reflect the beaming smile on his face.

"Your fame is made, madame. Don't hesitate to begin on your *repertoire* at once. You have my everlasting gratitude; you have saved me a humiliation."

The newspapers were very elaborate in their praise. The reporters called on me and were surprised to learn that I thoroughly understood the workings of the editorial machines in grinding out "copy." They were my best friends, and I took pains to help them to "good stories." The old newspaper experiences came back to me, and the pleasant hours I spent in receiving those keen, bright-eyed young newspaper men are still accounted fortunate days among my recollections.

Those who succeed in a public career seldom

realize how much they owe to these irrepressible journalists, who are at heart generous to a fault and are only a little too strenuous in their pursuit of news.

In a few weeks I was known as a singer throughout America, and properly christened with a stage name. Even the querulous comment of the older critics, who never liked to agree with the younger ones, had its beneficial effect in making "Madame Helvina" known to the musical world.

After this I began to develop a capacity for business. The oratorio engagement brought me numerous offers for concerts, although the income did not amount to much.

It was a newspaper man — Mr. Howard Wittaker — who solved the question of my future career.

"You should go abroad at once, Madame Helvina."

"Yes?"

"I've an idea," he went on. "Old James Burlingame, the wool magnate, was captivated by your singing. I will negotiate a loan."

"You're very kind, but be very careful—"

"Then will you tell me the real story of your life?" he entreated.

"No, that's a secret; the past is dead to me. Please don't ask me."

"As you will—I am at your service," he said, as he gallantly bowed himself out of the door.

An American newspaper man has a faculty for accomplishing results. A few days later I received a note:

"Enclosed find cheque, two thousand dollars, sent by order Mr. James Burlingame, who desires in return your personal note and photograph. Make the note due at a date convenient to yourself.

"J. SMITH & SONS, *Bankers.*"

I was unable to spare the money to visit my mother and the little Western home before I went abroad, and besides mother wrote insistently: "Start at once. Time counts. You are growing old." What! Growing old and only twenty! Yes, there were a few gray hairs. Anything but red hair! thought I.

The day of sailing soon arrived. The pier was crowded with people bidding farewell to

loved ones. Flowers and bouquets were showered upon the departing passengers. The first bell sounded and fond "Good-byes" were accompanied by tears. Mothers parting from sons, sweethearts from lovers, brothers from sisters, husbands from wives! How my loneliness made me envy even these partings. There was none there to bid me "good-bye." I stood alone looking over the rail as the cheers began and the hats and handkerchiefs waved from the pier. The brass band struck up a lively air, as if to drown the sobs while the great boat backed out from the pier and steamed majestically down the harbor.

The last sound I heard from my native shore was the dismal echo of the bell-buoy as, swaying to and fro on the waves of the restless sea, its ponderous fog bell struck the tolling minor chord of the ocean guardian of the harbor channel.

CHAPTER XX

I Meet Gene Paroski

SINCE the earliest Scriptural accounts of the days of Jonah and the journey to Rome of St. Paul, various attempts have been made to describe a sea voyage. It is something that is so thoroughly felt that a mere personal record of feelings seems a mockery.

The genial old pilot—an ideal sea dog—was lowered into his boat just outside the harbor, laden with last messages to friends behind. When I handed him a letter for mother, I felt as if I were bound for eternity. Once out of sight of land, the ocean appeared very calm, but the big steamer began rocking like a cradle. The "feeling" came on insidiously, and I soon retired below, trying to smile, as I left some new friends in steamer chairs on deck.

I had often sung about the deep blue sea, but had never realized what it was before.

The blue is almost an indigo, and seems to color even the white-crested foam in the vessel's wake. The first day at sea is never the most sociable of the voyage. There is always a reserve that needs to be driven away by the ocean air. The trumpet-call for meals is heard regularly, although few respond the first days. After my attack of *mal de mer* the motion of the steamer began to feel like the old swing at home, and I quite enjoyed it. Concerts were given in the saloon as the patients recovered from the throes of sea-sickness and attained enormous appetites and a desire for human companionship. We learn in the idle days spent in crossing the Atlantic more personal and biographical information from fellow-passengers than they would be likely to relate otherwise in a lifetime. The company on board were very agreeable, and we began to feel like one large family, and conversed pleasantly on musical, literary and personal matters. It was altogether entertaining. While there were many interesting men on board, my fancy was taken with a fair-haired young fellow of whom no one seemed to take

much notice. His loneliness created a bond of sympathy between us, and we soon became friends.

"Aren't you a singer?" he asked, looking at me earnestly.

"I hope to be some day," I replied.

"I think," he said shyly, "that you must be Madame Helvina. My mother heard you in 'The Creation' in Boston, and she says you are going to be a great singer. My mother is a musician."

Bless his heart! He struck my weak point—mother-love—and I could have hugged him for those words.

"Tell me about your mother," I said, interested.

"She is a Polish woman. I am American born, but am now on my way to join my parents, who have returned to Poland. It's a poor place for musicians, but mother recently inherited the old home, and they have decided to go there to live."

"Do you inherit your mother's musical taste and do you sing?" I asked, with that indifference of a feminine cross-examination.

"No, I am a violinist."

We passed many happy hours together. He played and I sang, sometimes prevailing on him to join me in his rich tenor.

"Why don't you develop your voice?" I asked one day.

"Because," he answered regretfully, "my father objects. He was an operatic tenor once, and I suppose has good reason for not wanting me to become a singer, although I love to sing."

"Well, Gene," said I, for that was his name, "you must sing. Study the great art—for me!"

I pressed his hand and he promised to do as I wished.

The men in the smoking-room continued their games until late at night. During the day they made wagers on every possible incident which involved doubt—on the number of miles the ship would go, on how many vessels we would sight during the day, on fog or no fog; and it reached my ears that wagers were pending as to whether or not the fair-haired young Pole would win the hand of the singing lady before we arrived in Southampton.

Was I so much of a flirt? It provoked me,

and I determined to hold in check even the pleasant artistic acquaintance of my first sea voyage.

It was with no little emotion that I first gazed on England, the home of my forefathers! Even the bleak, bare cliffs of Portland Bill seemed fascinating as we sailed up the Channel.

At the landing, after the blue-capped Customs officer had finished the examination of his portmanteau, Gene Paroski was in haste to catch his train, which was waiting.

"Madame Helvina, I am going, and—and—"

He stood bashfully in front of me, cap in hand.

The men from the smoking-room caught sight of us and looked for the parson. They had lost their wager.

"Don't forget that voice," I said, shaking his hand, "and we'll sing together again some time, perhaps. Good-bye."

From the train he waved his hand to me and was gone before I boarded the London train.

It was my first meeting with one who I felt would become a famous tenor.

CHAPTER XXI

The Boat Race

LONDON! An American is often at first disgusted and later falls in love with the great city. There is only one London on earth. The crush of vehicles, the lamp-post islands in the center of the streets, Old Father Thames with the tide in and out, Trafalgar Square, Piccadilly Circus—it all rushes back to me. All my life I had longed to visit London!

My grandfather lived a short distance from London, in one of the prettiest little villages in England, on the banks of the classic Thames. He had seen seventy summers, and was a typical jolly Englishman. His proverbial good-nature and contented mind were the secret of his youthful spirit and robust health.

"Welcome, Minza! welcome to Ashley! How like Robert you are!" he cried as he greeted me.

Although I had never seen him before, we were drawn closely together by that strong tie of blood relationship.

I am afraid at first that I was not as diligent in my studies as I might have been. I wandered down past the old bridge where father and his brothers had spent many happy days in their youth. Lord Tonquay's old place, with its high walls, Stompy Pond, Birwood Park, the old inns, all had their history. I revelled in ancestral scenes. The old churchyard—the moss-covered gravestones and epitaphs—the simple stone that marked the resting-place of my great-great-grandmother—all this was awe-inspiring even to an American. I found, in faded ink, among the old records in the vestry, the date of father's christening.

Every evening grandfather sat in the ivy-covered porch through the long summer twilight. One night, when I had finished singing for him, I came out and kissed his dear old face.

"Grandpa," I asked, sitting down on his knee, "who were our ancestors?"

This question only indicated the curiosity common to all American girls. Of course they do not care for ancient and noble lineage, but they would "like to know" just for curiosity.

"They do say," said grandpa reflectively, with

a twinkle in his eye, "that many of our very ancient ancestors are buried in Cornwall, and that they were a branch of Lord Grundy's family."

"Ah, but who were we before that, as far back as the time of William the Conqueror?" I continued inquisitively.

"My dear Minza," said grandfather, as if beginning a long narrative, "my memory does not run back quite so far as that. However, the dove and the linnet is our coat of arms."

"But who were our ancestors?"

"You inquisitive little minx! And do you want to know the real truth? As an American, the question of ancestry ought not to interest you to any great extent."

"Well, I should like to know, grandpa—just out of curiosity, you know."

"Oh, indeed! Well, Minza, the earliest Maxwell that we have any trace of in the genealogical investigations was—a Cornish pirate!"

"A pirate!" I gasped.

"Just so—ha, ha, ha! and there's a lot of the piratical blood left yet," and he laughed heartily at my discomfiture.

This revelation paralyzed my curiosity; I asked no further questions and discontinued my studies of the family tree.

The next day I attended a regatta at Ashley-on-Thames. The morning brought a typical British drizzle, but in England everything starts punctually, and the first race was called during a heavy shower at 9.30. It was a single-scull race. The contestants were brawny fellows, and their bare knees seemed higher than their heads as they pulled the long narrow shell, almost bounding through the water. It was a close and exciting race, and a shot fired when the first boat crossed the line announced the finish. Later in the day the river was filled with steam launches from London, and row-boats from neighboring towns. There were also many punts, which resemble the Venetian gondola, and which are pushed along by means of a long pole. It was altogether a gala day, and the broad English dialect almost made me feel as if I were in a foreign land; I could scarcely understand a word of the English as spoken among the boatmen.

When the race was called between the Ash-

ley Blues and the Rushtons, there was great excitement. It was the event of the day. All craned their necks to see the contest between the rival towns. The Ashley crew wore blue shirts and [illegible]d. I was in a punt in mid[illegible]d sent the garden-[illegible] I chose the Blues [illegible] the seat of the [illegible] them as they [illegible]tarting-post. [illegible] was in the [illegible]d through [illegible]ne leader of the [illegible]rom his seat, nearly [illegible]ades in the shell, and soon [illegible]afely on shore. Awkward and a [illegible]d, I stood looking at him, with my skirts dripping.

"Are you all right?" he asked, as the crowd pushed forward.

"Yes, thank you," I said, trying to make the best of my appearance.

"Permit me to call a carriage," he said, as I started for the house, which was nearby.

"Don't let me hinder the race," I protested.

"Bother the race!" he said, walking by my side toward the house. "Let it wait."

"How can I ever thank you?" I said when he turned at the gate to leave me.

"Oh, never mind that! See that you don't catch cold from your bath. I'll call tomorrow, if I may, to see how you are."

He raised his cap and was gone.

"Well, well, my girl, what's this?" said grandpa, coming to meet me and thumping his cane.

"Fell overboard, grandpa."

"What! and where is James? Are you wet?" he said, touching my dripping gown. "Well, I never! Go and change your things and come and have a cup o' tea."

Some of the young ladies in the neighborhood were so cruel as to remark: "Ah, that's the way of these impudent American girls; that's how they catch our handsome young men. They fall overboard and are fished out. They are always fishing."

The Ashley Blues won. Mr. Waldo, for that was my rescuer's name, came to tell me so that

evening, and he smoked his pipe with grandpa on the porch while I sang.

On parting, he looked at me intently and held my hand quite too long, I thought.

"Good-night, Mr. Waldo," I said lightly. "I wish my husband were here to thank my rescuer."

He dropped my hand abruptly and left me with a hurried "Good-night."

CHAPTER XXII

My Debut

EVERY morning as the dear old landscape of Ashley and the Thames greeted my eyes, it all seemed like a happy dream. The coaches from London were laden with merry throngs of tourists, and I began to envy them. The purpose of my life was beginning to be a burden again; there are times when we reflect, "Is the game worth the candle?" But I had determined to consecrate my life to music, and the singer, like the author, the barrister, the gymnast, or even the prize-fighter, must always "go into training."

In another week I was to be on my way to Milan to complete my studies in *repertoire*. The young "Ashley Blue," Mr. Waldo, called one afternoon, greatly to my surprise, until I learned that grandfather had told him I was a widow. He was gently sympathetic, and I could not be rude to such a handsome young fellow. Of course, I may have enjoyed his

company, but then, you know, he had saved my life.

"I am going on the Continent, too," he said as we were about to part under the dear old oak trees in the park. "We will see each other there," he whispered.

Men have a way of putting a woman on the defensive. His eyes were eloquent. Why are men always falling in love?

"No," I said firmly. "I must work with all my concentrated energy. No more pleasure now. Some day we may meet again."

"Some day!" he echoed sadly.

On my journey to Milan I met many family parties traveling about with nothing in view but pleasure. Pleasure—always pleasure—was their sole pursuit in life! Their happy faces always made me keenly envious, and set me to longing for that sweet-faced little mother in the West. How I wished she could be with me.

The busy periods of our lives are always the most difficult to describe. My studies that winter were simply a round of endless hard work, trying to master the Italian language, until even the practice of scales and exercises

became a positive relief. The trills bothered me, until I longed for a magic spell to give me a bird's throat.

The day's work was long and I fairly hungered for one word of English with the real American accent!

The dear old Italian teachers were patient. They inspired me with a true passion for music. An Italian has a love for music such as no other nationality seems to possess in like measure.

The dreamy, soft sunlight of afternoon and the pale liquid moonlight in Italy—it is all music. Young lovers passed my window, murmuring in soft, musical Italian. From them I caught the inspiration for my operatic *debut.* I studied every glance, every motion, hours at a time—for art's sake.

A number of letters was received regularly from home, but they seemed to be written almost in a foreign language. I had so steeped my brain in the study of Italian that I began to fear I would forget my English.

In one of mother's letters during the following spring she wrote: "I think it is quite time

that you made your *debut*, Minza; you are getting on in years."

Growing old! How a lonely woman dreads age! With her, there is no responsive mother love, there are no little arms about her neck to compensate for gray hairs and wrinkles. Oh, mothers, mothers! you may be worn out with the cries and boisterous play of your little ones, but in them you have the only true happiness known to woman. A pure mother-love is the nearest approach to heavenly happiness.

Mother's letter decided it, and the next day I said to my tutor:

"I want to make my *debut* this season."

He looked at me, rather startled.

"No, no," he protested, "you are not finished, madam. You must dazzle the world. Your trills need more finish. Your voice is not strong enough to stand the strain and blend with those shrieking, bellowing Germans."

He disliked the Germans.

There was another reason why I was eager to make that *debut*. I had a rival. She was a pretty girl, with plenty of money and friends,

and her voice was really captivating, but I will confess I could not admire her. She was announced to appear later in the season, and I wanted to come out first and settle my fate before I had to suffer a contrast. My weak point was in acting—I was awkward and could only take slow and dignified *roles*.

The tenor with whom I rehearsed was an interesting fellow. His face was pitted with smallpox, although on the stage he made a handsome lover. His Alfredo in "La Traviata" was a finished expression, and our voices blended well, though during rehearsals I found it difficult to put any spirit and enthusiasm into our love scene.

"You must have Signor Tonza," said my teacher, "your voices blend like a chime of bells—so beautiful, exquisite!"

The last dress rehearsal had ended. My teacher, Signor Gellani, was to direct the opera. How his *baton* inspired me! I found every retard, and soon cultivated the art of watching the wave of that wand without looking at him. The rehearsal was anything but encouraging; my high notes seemed shrill, and a huskiness

that would ruin any *debutante* was apparent in the lower tones. The *impresario* wanted to postpone the opera. "No," I said, "my fate must be decided tonight."

In a tremor I was "made up" in the dressing-room that night. The maid brought my slippers first, and after carefully adjusting the blonde wig, announced me as "beautiful." I would wear no flowers.

"Just a simple rose, signorita!" pleaded the maid.

"No, I must win my laurels first," I whispered, half to myself.

Softly the orchestra began the *adagio preludio*. The first "call" was made. As the *tempo* increased, my heart beat faster and faster. The dashing chromatic runs of the *Introduzione* had just commenced when the call-boy appeared. The curtain bell tapped as we reached the wings, and I hastily threw away the lemon I had been enjoying and took my position as the curtain was raised and the male *coro* began.

A short prayer before my first tone! The wand fell before my eyes. The crisis of a life had come. Was I to succeed? I responded

to the signal of the *baton*—which danced before my eyes like a black demon—and sang the opening and touching phrase of Violetta's welcome.

Many times had I sung those notes, but never before had I realized that, although a joyous response of welcome, it was in a minor key.

I cannot recall many incidents of that night. The dear old director was so furiously excited that he nearly lost his place.

I gathered all my strength for the *duettino* with Alfredo. It must be music. The singing of birds seemed to break upon me, and I half closed my eyes to the blinding sea of light in front, for the supreme moment had come, and the high note was approaching. I took a careful breath and sustained the note easily with a crescendo and diminuendo. My mind flashed on every phrase of the score. The orchestra seemed sympathetic, so that I soon forgot the notes themselves—the glides, the rests, the holds; my soul seemed fired with the spirit of the dashing, defiant Violetta. In fact, my chief concern was the precise location of my hands and feet rather than the score of the music. It

is the last phrase that usually impresses the audience for good or ill. I threw into the song a tone that expressed despairing passion, but which can never be written in notes—a wail of despairing love. With it came a vision of mother and home, and tears burst through my heavily pencilled eyelashes. I held the last two notes fervently, loth to leave them. Then I forgot all anxiety as to whether they were falling short of the mark. What mockery there seemed in those last two measures of the opera, "How joyful!"

It, too, was a minor refrain.

Even the accelerated dash of the orchestral finale as the curtain fell was a crash—a Minor Chord.

There was an outburst of applause when the curtain went down upon the finale. Handkerchiefs waved, the loyal little colony of Americans who were present were fairly frantic, and as I stepped before the curtain I was crowned with a handsome wreath of flowers. Dazed by the rush of events, I had almost forgotten to bow my acknowledgments until I was reminded by Tonza, who had led me on.

A few moments later there was a knock at my door.

"Come in," I said wearily.

"Signorita vas e-exquizite!" cried Gellani excitedly. "Ze signorita's a great prima!" he continued, dancing around.

The musical critics scored poor Tonza severely the next day, with an occasional modification in reference to the beautiful and plucky young American prima. But I had made my operatic *debut*, and now my career began in earnest.

That very night I wrote to mother, enclosing translations of the most favorable portions of the criticisms. I also wrote to Howard Wittaker, my newspaper friend at Boston, and also to my enthusiastic benefactor, Mr. Burlingame. Before my letter reached Howard he had had syndicate letters and correspondence wired all over the United States: "Great Triumph in Italy by the Young and Beautiful American Prima Donna, Madame Helvina!"

Here is where the deception of my stage biography began. He knew little of my real history, and, like the good American newspaper

man, arranged a romantic career for me. Howard was warm-hearted and impulsive, and I never had the heart to contradict his fairy stories.

"I have taken the flood tide to work up a great reception for you when you return," he wrote, "and you will be received with almost royal honors."

He kept aglow a curiosity concerning my personality, which always increases public interest, and gave my career enough mystery to whet the public appetite. Even mother did not recognize her own daughter in the newspaper articles, and today very few of the old Smithville friends know that "Madame Helvina" is Minza Maxwell.

I dreamed much about that time of my lost husband and wandered in my visions among many wild and savage scenes in search of the frenzied aeronaut, who had been so near and dear to me, and who had so suddenly dropped out of my life altogether. Generally he was fleeing away before my pursuing, weary and flagging feet; over simoon, parched deserts, his gay balloon rose and wavered; across jagged

ice fields it kept just out of hail of my parched and husky throat; up Alpine gorges it rose amid the yodeling of wondering shepherds and the screaming of startled and angry eagles, disturbed for the first time in their inaccessible nests.

CHAPTER XXIII

Life in Paris

WE naturally cling to that role or specialty which has first given us "a success." The author who makes a hit with a certain idea or innovation seems forever after to have that idea hovering about him, and its evanescent or sterling excellence remains in his style throughout life.

We may theorize upon the essentials and ingredients of success; immortalize hard work, genius, and careful study; but thousands sink into obloquy, into unknown graves, whose efforts are perhaps more admirable and more nearly perfect, from a theoretical standpoint, than are the efforts of those who from flint and steel strike out the fire of fame.

My success was in many ways a chance; but it struck a popular vein, and my ability was equal to the emergency presented.

The critics vigorously attacked me and said that I was awkward in my acting and had

evidently never known the joys of a real love or the art of love-making. To strengthen this weakness I decided to go to Paris and study with Delsarte, and to learn how to pose and act gracefully and effectively in the varied scenes of operatic performance.

The course of lessons which I took in posing and in plastiques was arduous. It seemed as if I had every natural motion to reform. My fingers must not spread out; my arms must wave in curves—no sharp corners in Art, no rectangular motions—all in graceful arcs, as the sky above. I must confess I grew to enjoy it, and the staid old butler who accompanied me on my walks lost his hat several times when I took a sudden and erratic fancy to box, for even this was Delsarte, you know.

What a flood of historical associations were suggested as I walked through the streets of Paris! The boulevards were fringed with tables and chairs, and everyone seemed to be drinking, eating, and chatting. The Theatre National, with its imperious bronze figures, fascinated me. Should I ever sing in that temple of opera? At Pere-la-Chaise I came upon the

tomb of Heloise and Abelard. Under a canopy of stones from the monastery of Abelard were the two recumbent figures—monk and nun. They were buried side by side, the emblem of disappointed love during the ages. The story is old; and as I stood looking over the iron fence at the beautiful flowers, young French girls with pensive eyes passed by and flung withered bouquets upon the dingy and century-wasted tomb.

It was nearly dark when I left behind me the shadows of the cemetery.

That night, while I was sitting safe in my snug and cosy room with my music, dismal feelings were dispelled, for there was work.

Suddenly there was a knock at my door. It was a woman clad but poorly and about to become a mother.

"Madame Helvina," she said in pure American English, "it is you or the Seine"—this with a tragic gesture, pointing to the river.

"What is the matter?" I asked, bidding her come in.

"Two years ago," she said slowly, "I came to Paris from America, a happy, ambitious

girl. I wanted to be an actress. I studied and made my appearance, but, oh, the temptations, madame! It's the old story, and here I am, ready to die."

She broke down and sobbed tempestuously. I knew something of the troubles of an actress. Worshipped, flattered and adored, she has temptations never dreamed of by those who so heartlessly condemn her.

I asked for her story in detail. She said her name was Lila Bingham, and when she referred to the young girlhood lover whom she had left behind in America and drew from her breast a picture of her mother, I was soon crying with her.

My means were scant, but she should not be turned out into the street.

Her little one was born a few days afterward. Lila improved slowly, but her face grew hard and solemn as she nursed the child. Three or four weeks later, on my return from a lesson, I found Lila gone and the baby in its cradle, crying pitifully. For some weeks I waited anxiously for news of her, but nothing could be learned as to where she had gone. I com-

municated the matter to the police, and one day received a message from the gendarmerie to call at once at the Morgue.

How many final chapters of human misery display their *Finis* behind those glass partitions! The row of ghastly faces look out upon you with all the conceivable horrors of death. On the last table in the corner was the face I sought. There lay Lila—beautiful in death; the cruel waters of the Seine seemed to have washed away the deep lines of sorrow which so lately had come into her sweet face.

It was the old story over again, and now my thoughts were for the child. I prepared to be a real mother to him, and gave him the name of Tim; but two weeks later I followed the tiny coffin to the cemetery. The little life had faded like a tender flower.

The death of the helpless little waif had occasioned me great anxiety. I should never have been able to go through it all had it not been for Mrs. Campbell, an elderly Scotch lady then residing in Paris, who occupied the rooms adjoining mine. She always wore

a neat white widow's cap, and her kind heart sparkled in her smiles, and even seemed to glisten through the gold-rimmed spectacles.

It was with Mrs. Campbell in Paris that I witnessed a balloon ascent. It brought back many old and sad memories of the husband to whom I was still wedded, if, indeed, he was still alive. A young girl was to make the ascent and it was made a *fete* day in the Bois de Boulogne. The great swaying balloon started on its aerial voyage slowly and majestically. I shuddered as it lurched now this way and now that, on, up, up into the clouds! Had the great Minza balloon gone waveringly up into the air abysses only to deposit its crushed and lifeless occupants on some inaccessible escapement or impassable glacier?

"Why do they allow such nonsense?" said Mrs. Campbell excitedly. "I call anyone crazy that would venture on such an expedition. It ought not to be permitted."

"Yes," I replied wearily, "but you know anything is allowed that makes money and advances science."

"Well, it's tempting Providence," persisted

the dear old lady, "and a man who would make a balloon has sold himself to the devil!"

Poor Mrs. Campbell! She could not know how every word went to my heart. Was I widow or wife? Had I done my full duty in trying to find poor Robert? We often meet people who become a conscience to us, and Mrs. Campbell was mine. Should I tell her my story? That night I fell asleep at her side—for she now shared my rooms—dreaming of my lost husband and his balloons.

CHAPTER XXIV

At Covent Garden

WHEN success is once under full headway, it seems to be cumulative. The world worships success. While in Paris I received the offer of an engagement at Covent Garden in London. I had long looked forward to it, for now my dear grandfather should go to the opera, although he held to the old ideas that an actress was *de trop*. He had served many years as butler in an aristocratic family. His faithful life of service had developed a gentle character and I consoled myself for our lack of pedigree by believing that the best people must come from servants, as they transmit virtues, while their masters inherit and re-inherit the vices of luxury so that every few generations the servant becomes master and the master servant. On the first night of my engagement at Covent Garden there were present members of the Royal Family, and while I affected unconcern, I must confess

that I was nervous. The opera to be given was "Lohengrin." Elsa was my favorite *role*, and how happy it made me to see grandfather's bright, beaming face in one of those scarlet plush-lined boxes! His big blue eyes were wide open like a child's with wonderment. He reminded me of father. In the box with him was Mrs. Campbell. His courtly gallantry was quite true to the ideals of the old school, and Mrs. Campbell's face beamed brighter than ever.

The violins began with the plaintive high notes of the opening measures, the chords began to gather for a crash and climax such as only Wagner's master spirit could embody in a musical score.

I instinctively prayed as the soft, sad notes which preceded my entrance were given by the orchestra.

Attired in pure, unadorned white, I stepped from behind the wings. I studied every note before reaching it. "Music, my heart! music!" was my cry.

I watched for the response. It was to grandpa that I was singing. I caught his eyes sparkling

with tears, and it gave me a thrill of delight. Every pantomimic action of the opera now seemed easy. The tenor was rather stiff at first, but I soon had him devoted to me. Our bridal chamber duet was the best we had ever rendered. The spirit of the composer seemed upon us. The curly wig and jaunty cap of Lohengrin was my ideal of Tim, and I threw myself into a trance of childhood once more. The quiet, dazed look—the "innocent Elsa" expression which I had rehearsed for hours before a glass—it was all so natural to me now. No matter how many times I may sing a *role*, there is always some particular phrase that I dread, and once it is passed I feel a sense of relief. The duet was my dread that night, but it proved to be the greatest success of the evening.

Grandpa was satisfied and I was happy, although the critics were rather harsh next day.

"Minza, little Minza! Rob's girl!—and such a singer! I never dreamed of living for so much happiness," said grandpa after the opera, embracing me as father always did. "So like your dear grandma! How I wish she were

here! Poor mother!" and he brushed away a tear.

Grandma was buried at Ashley in the little churchyard that surrounded the old ivy-clustered tower of St. Helen's. Her only living daughter was Aunt Manda, father's sister, and she had been "in service" all her life. Father used to tell mother that his sister had almost been a mother to the Elferton family, which included the viscount and the four daughters. I remember hearing father say that the daughters were greatly attached to the dear old lady, who had grown to look like Queen Victoria.

"My young ladies' dogs," said Aunt Manda, one day when I met her by appointment in Hyde Park. There were ten of them altogether—of all sorts and colors—out for their daily airing. "I have just been to the doctor for little Pete."

"Oh, indeed," I remarked bitterly. "Well, they have all the luxuries of life."

I became interested in these four young ladies and their dogs. Though clever and beautiful, yet they led empty lives—they simply existed,

waiting for the matrimonial market to be more active, in the meantime concentrating their affections upon dogs rather than human beings.

One day I went to call on Aunt Manda at the earl's London house. I entered by the servant's door at the rear. We took tea with the housekeeper and upper servants, the butler, the valet and powdered footman, and I listened, amused, to their gossip. They knew more about the "goings on" of English aristocracy than the lords and ladies themselves. Every carriage and coachman was known to them. Family secrets were peddled out by the yard. We had scarcely finished tea when there was a commotion outside in the hall.

"Maxwell, Maxwell, why do you leave poor Pete alone?" It was my lady reprimanding poor auntie, who had left the dog, which did not look worth a decent burial, and in the hum of conversation at the table auntie had not heard the bell ring.

"The doctor is here," continued my lady, "and you must follow his instructions."

The doctor felt Pete's pulse and winked.

In the beautiful boudoir upstairs no fewer than ten toy poodles revelled in luxurious ease while the four young ladies took tea. They kissed the dogs and drank tea, then drank tea and kissed the dogs. It was an ideal scene of an autocratic lady's passion for canines. True, the dog is a faithful friend who never reveals a secret. Another kiss and a hug for doggy. Under those very windows were a score of little children—London street waifs—crying and starving for bread.

"Maxwell," spoke up one of the young ladies in a rather languid and irritable tone, "you must not loiter here. Come, bustle about; attend to the dogs and feed them properly." My fist instinctively doubled. My aunt a slave—a keeper of dogs—for these vacant, idle and shiftless beings who happened to be born under an earl's roof!

I caught a glimpse of the viscount as he passed by the door. He was a handsome young fellow, but his sister's words burned into my heart. He was a member of Parliament—Lord Hamper, eldest son of the Earl of Elferton.

I took a cab home and arranged that auntie should take tea with me on the following Wednesday.

That night, after the opera, a card was presented. "Lord Hamper." We met. My eyes dropped—perhaps I had put an extra dimple in my cheeks. I tried to be winsome. He was very clever and sympathized with some of my pet philanthropic ideas. He called the next night and the next. It was becoming truly interesting, and the chorus girls all gossiped as to how cleverly Madame Helvina had angled for the son of an English earl. Lord Hamper was a musician, and I confess it was rather pleasant to receive his handsome compliments and attentions.

"May I see you tomorrow?" he said one Tuesday night. "I have something important to say to you."

I dropped my eyes quickly and blushed.

"Perhaps," I murmured.

"But I must. I have come to—"

"Isn't that a beautiful likeness of Tonza?" I broke in, anxious to change the subject and pointing to a photograph.

It was on a lovely night in June

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"May I come tomorrow?" he persisted.

"Tea at four," I answered rising.

"You make me so happy!" he said, as he bowed himself out.

The next day he appeared promptly at four o'clock.

I was always fond of making tea myself—it reminded me of childhood days, and Lord Hamper watched me with interest—even assisting me. The scene was altogether charmingly domestic.

I was about to pass him a cup of tea.

"Before I drink a drop," he said suddenly, "I must know my fate. I—I adore you, Madame Helvina! Will you—will you—" In his ardor he had knocked the cup from my hand and its contents poured down his shirt-front. I nearly laughed outright. Poor fellow, he was very much in earnest.

"You must marry me," he pleaded, rising as he made an effort to brush away the stain, and picked up the empty cup.

"Well, I'll see," I replied coolly. "Why, I expected more company to tea," I said, endeavoring to set matters right.

"Why didn't you tell me? I shall go presently, but let me say I love you and will make you happy as my wife. Say the word—my queen!" Men will always insist on the possessive in proposing.

He was on his knees again, in order to prolong our *tete-a-tete*, and determined to have his say.

At that moment Aunt Manda bustled in, with her delegation of ten dogs, from a walk in the Park.

She was startled; he was confounded.

"My Aunt Manda, Lord Hamper," I explained, presenting her with all the pomp of court life.

"Why, dear me," he exclaimed to me aside, "she is my sisters' maid!"

"Is that so?" I said innocently. "She is my own flesh and blood, my father's sister."

"The devil!" he gasped, as he started to take his leave, with scarcely a glance at Aunt Manda.

The rumor was circulated that I had refused the hand of an earl's son.

Aunt Manda was amazed and tried bravely to disown me, so that Lord Hamper should

not be miserable. But she could not change my birthright. I was Minza Maxwell, descended from a Cornish pirate, and the flesh and blood relation of English servants; but I felt all American that day and proud of the fact that my people knew the honest pride of a life of service.

CHAPTER XXV

Berlin and Gene Paroski

AFTER I had enjoyed a few days' rest at Ashley, Howard Wittaker, my Boston friend and patron, made his appearance. He had written me several times that I needed a business manager, and he now announced that he would assume that position.

Now that my *debut* was really over and the critics had opened their heavy artillery upon me, the doors of the large European theaters swung open, and the unending contest with astute managers and hostile rivals began.

From London I went to Berlin, which city I have always found full of musical appreciation and many attractions, as well as the center of a military power and organization, which is always a source of uneasiness to the diplomatists of other nations. The handsome German army officers, almost invariably wearing spectacles or eyeglasses, were very gallant and often very scholarly and enthusiastic in

their pursuit of art, literature or music, as well as of pleasure. Berlin severely criticized my "Elsa." I'm afraid I shed a few tears over the sharper stabs at my failures, real or presumed, but it aroused the old spirit. The Germans should yet praise me in my favorite Wagnerian role.

Everything in Berlin was strangely attractive; the Thier Garten, with its delightful and romantic drives; and the boats on the Spree which are pushed along by means of long poles. Yes, there was worse drudgery than a prima donna's career! The weather-beaten old palace, the splendid statue of Victory, the storied thoroughfare which to every Prussian's heart recalls a flood of grand, quaint, precious happenings, *Unter den Linden*—all these were charming. The Germans live in their halls and cafes, and their wives and children join freely in their simple pleasures. A few glasses of beer, gingerbread, sausage, slices of spicy rye bread, and the father's pipe, these they enjoy by the hour, listening, it may be, to the music of a great orchestra or the more artistic strains of a stray band. I stole a few hours to

visit the National Gallery, with its rooms radiating from a center like the spokes of a wheel. The pictures thrilled me, and I quite fell in love with Art; but my life's mission was Music, and I had to tear myself away for rehearsals.

I shall never forget one experience in Unter den Linden. We were out for a walk, Mrs. Campbell and I, and at last saw a small body of Prussian infantry coming down the street with that prompt, manly, if somewhat heavy stride which characterizes the Bavarian rifleman. There was no music, but the ranks swept past in perfect alignment and exquisite time, the officers in place scarcely needing to cast a stern glance here and there to keep their men in perfect order.

I felt rather than saw that a tall man had stopped behind us, and heard him murmur something in German, in which the word "*Gut*" was especially emphasized. I had felt the influence of that martial power and inspiration which the view of a fine body of soldiery always excites, and turning to Mrs. Campbell I said, "How I wish dear father could see these men.

He is another man when he hears the drums beat and the rhythm of marching soldiery."

"And mine, too," said Mrs. Campbell sadly, "poor auld mon, though I'm thinkin' he'll scarcely be able to be about much now."

"Pardon, ladies," said the tall man politely, "are you English, that you speak of veterans of the old wars?"

"I am of English descent," I said a little stiffly, "but my father was a volunteer in the United States army during the Civil War and was wounded at the siege of Vicksburg."

"Ah, Madame, that was a great siege, an undying honor to both victor and vanquished; I would I could see the city myself and go over the parallels of Grant and the intrenchments of Pemberton. But alas," and he said it with a sigh, "that can never be."

"But why not?" I cried, and this time more cordially. "They are saving the old forts and trenches and will make a great national park of the lines. The regiments and states, north and south, will put up landmarks and memorials, and you would find everything complete to study it all out."

"It would be splendid, Madam," he agreed, "but I cannot leave Germany. I am tied here; at least it seems so now. And your father," he said, turning to Mrs. Campbell, "he at least was a British soldier, I am sure?"

"Indeed he was, sir, one of the Scots Guards that fought at the Alma and Balaclava. Aye, and had his share o' fechtin' in India, too."

"A good man and true, I have no doubt. May God send both comfort here and eternal happiness hereafter."

Where had I seen that man before? I could not see the color of his eyes, for thick, gold-bowed spectacles covered them even more closely than is usual, but he was masterful in an easy, natural way that I had never yet encountered. His bearing was very soldierly, and it was easy to see that his natural ambition was to be a great soldier, however far away the fates had placed the goal of his ambition. But—could it be? I trembled—"Your Maj—" I began.

"Not a word." The command was a mere whisper, but it was enough. "Forgive me," he said more gently, "but Haroun Al Raschid

would traverse unknown his good city of Bagdad. Many thanks for a few moments of pleasant and unconventional converse," and raising his hat, he passed on, attended as I now saw by a number of gentlemen who sedulously paid a careless attention to everything else except their royal charge.

I didn't dare to look after him and so turned homeward, but counted it the greatest of all my European experiences that we had actually met and talked with the redoubtable "War Lord" of Prussia and United Germany. As for Mrs. Campbell, she was radiant. "A'm no denyin' it," she said. "A'm lifted up aboon my fellows. To think that I, Flora Cammill, of Abergavenny, should ha' met, ay, an' talked wi' the Emperor o' Germany, himsel'. I can scarcely believe it."

I supposed that was the last of my adventure, but a few days later Madame Helvina received the Imperial "order" to appear and sing before the Royal Family, with a suggestion that I bring my attendant, and be prepared to sing some American war songs. We went, and good Mrs. Campbell was hospitably cared

for by the palace attendants, while I, simply attired, was received most kindly by the Emperor and Empress, and their relatives, who formed a majority of those present.

I sang Mrs. Julia Ward Howe's immortal "Battle Hymn of the Republic," and in answer to questions told of meeting the dear old authoress, and of how my father had sung this song with his comrades on the march, when, thirsty and weary, they were compelled to march on to the point of danger. Then I sang "Dixie," greatly to the delight of a tall, black-eyed gentleman who I afterwards learned had never returned to America after the fall of Richmond. Lastly I was about to sing "What is the German Fatherland," when the Emperor with a nod to the conductor of the little orchestra, gave a signal, and one of the great tapestries rose noiselessly, revealing a score or more of the Bavarians who had marched past me on that memorable afternoon, and part of the Imperial Band. At the same time there glided into the saloon a number of the castle attendants, and with them Mrs. Campbell, evidently in the seventh heaven of pride and happiness.

"They will join Madame in the chorus," said the conductor, and the accompaniment began. I sang the thrilling German words as I never expect to sing them again, but when we came to the chorus, the deep rich voices of those Bavarian riflemen, sedulously restrained, but full of patriotic love and fire, seemed to carry me up to the very empyrean of song. "Another verse," said the Emperor softly; and "another verse," whispered the Empress when that was done. I had to sing them all before the great curtain fell again, and the royal hosts bade me a simple farewell.

"We cannot treat you Americans in just the same way as the subjects of other powers," said the Empress pleasantly. "You have given us a very pleasant evening, and the Emperor wishes you and your companion to have something to remember us by. This is for you, and the other little matters will be sent to your address. Farewell; may you be fortunate and happy."

So I took my leave in due form, and on reaching home found Mrs. Campbell rejoicing over a handsome *douceur* for herself and a

silver snuff box for her father, some servant having learned that Sergeant Campbell was partial to Maccaboy.

In addition to a small but valuable diamond ring given me by the Empress, I had been sent the usual "honorarium," more than equal to an evening's salary, and a beautiful meerschaum pipe for father, which the dear man did not live long enough to "color" to the perfection which he had planned, but which was a great comfort and source of pride, as he surveyed the Prussian eagle on a little silver shield and the legend "To an old soldier, from a young one."

A week later I was at Dresden. As incidental to a prima donna's career, I thought that a visit to the Green Vaults, with their priceless jewels, was quite proper.

Here were the jewels that kings had struggled to possess, and yet the humblest tourist can enjoy these matchless gems quite as much as the princes who once owned and used those great swords studded with diamonds and rubies! The radiance and reflection of sapphire, amethyst, emerald, opal, the sheen of pearls, quite

bewildered me with their blaze. Like all women, I was fascinated with beautiful jewels and was a wee bit envious.

Another of my weaknesses which I discovered while in Dresden was china, and indeed no one who loves art and beauty can fail to be overwhelmed with the endless succession of fragile but exquisite creations. I enjoyed selecting presents for those at home, and I think, if Howard had not given me a very strong hint, I should have been another thousand dollars in debt if I had remained longer within reach of temptaion.

The second night of our engagement in Dresden, Tonza fell ill, and an understudy was brought from Berlin to take his part. We were called hastily for an extra rehearsal that afternoon. In the dim light of the Opera House, with my mind quite under the spell of the china shops, I did not notice who was to sing Lohengrin. It was a new voice, and yet—surely I had heard it before. I came up from the dressing-room hurriedly.

It was Gene Paroski! In a few years the fair-haired boy had developed into full and

robust manhood. It brought back the memory of my first meeting with him, and I could not conceal my delight that the promise of his boyhood had so soon been realized.

"Madame Helvina!" he whispered joyously as the orchestra began and we were about to sing, and I have never before or since felt so supremely the truth that music is an universal language, in which congenial souls may hold communion, for that night Gene told me in song many things which later he rehearsed in words, simply repeating much that I had already heard in his wonderful rendition.

He made music of every note—not that tiresome, quavering vibrato, that seems uncertain and wavers about a semitone; not that expletive angry gush that tenors love to gurgle when in the last stages of despairing love; not that clever falsetto and head tone—but a voice robust, firm, clear, manly and musical.

They say that prima donnas and tenors must be in love to sing well. Musically, perhaps, they do, for I felt an enthusiasm in singing with Gene Paroski that I had never known before.

We were lost in the characters we assumed; for us the audience no longer existed

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That performance decided that I was to go to Bayreuth. At last my Elsa was appreciated.

During the opera we had scarcely spoken a word together, but we were lost in the characters we assumed; for us the great audience no longer existed. We were Elsa and Lohengrin.

After the curtain fell on the last act Gene kissed my hand.

"To you, madame," he cried, "I owe everything."

"Hush! Gene," I replied, "you are talking nonsense."

"We will live for music, Madame Helvina," he continued warmly, "real music, and you will yet be the unrivaled queen of opera."

"Don't flatter, Gene," I said. "There is a long road with many turnings in a public career. But I'm so proud of you!"

"Are you? Well, you are responsible. I can never forget those kind words of encouragement you gave me on the steamer."

He told me his story, giving me a picture of his mother and himself, and we got on famously in our friendship; and, happily, he did not

mar it by persistent love-making every time we were alone.

The ways of managers are past understanding. Although critics praised my efforts with Gene and he was kept in the ranks, yet I continued with Tonza. The managers would not agree to my suggestion of an engagement for Gene in "Lohengrin."

"You will be getting married to him," was the heartless conclusion, "and that will spoil it all."

They did not know that Madame Helvina already had a husband, if, indeed, he still lived; and that until the last hope of his return was abandoned, love might perplex, but marriage was not for her.

The more stubborn the management, the more friendly were Gene and I, and we managed to sing together many times alone.

We worshipped at Apollo's shrine, and the shafts of Cupid fell harmlessly around us.

CHAPTER XXVI

Going Home Again

GOING home! Two thrilling and welcome words. I must have danced about like a little girl when Howard announced it one day in Berlin. He had succeeded in making engagements for "Madame Helvina" on that American circuit which has so often loaded with gold the blase and waning favorites of the European stage.

I had just returned from an excursion to the Sans Souci gardens at Potsdam, where I had revelled among the fountains and grounds made famous by Frederick the Great. The terrace which the great monarch used to pace for his morning walk was now overgrown with flowers. The little low palace of one story, Voltaire's room, the Death Gate—all was regal magnificence, and yet the owner died unhappy. The scenes of the day impressed me, and I looked forward now with pleasure to reading Carlyle's "Frederick the Great." Howard's

good news dissipated my intention. Going home! How sweet it seemed to an American who had been exiled for so long! There is no glory of fame that can dim the radiance of home love.

When the great vessel steamed into New York harbor my eyes filled with tears. It makes us better patriots to travel. During the years I had been absent I had witnessed no such inspiring scene as the Stars and Stripes floating everywhere in the great city. It was Memorial Day—a day set apart to decorate the graves of soldiers, for the children to sing patriotic songs, giving honor to the heroes, living and dead. And my father was an old soldier.

During my few first engagements in the Eastern states I had the honor to thank and repay my beneficent friend, James Burlingame. My generous patron was an ideal Boston gentleman. As we went to his handsome home in Back Bay my heart overflowed with gratitude.

"And this is my noble benefactor!" I said, advancing to him, and introducing myself and Mrs. Campbell. "To you I owe my stage career—"

"Do not talk to me of the stage, madame," he said excitedly. "I hate it!"

"Why!" I exclaimed in surprise. "You were always considered the great patron of the stage in Boston."

"Yes, but that was before—before—" And he broke into tears.

"Well, madame, perhaps I am unreasonable," he continued; "but the stage robbed me of my pretty little niece, my only hope in old age. She wanted to become an actress and went to Europe, like you. I gave her the money to go to Paris, and—but—but—" He broke down again.

"And you lost track of the poor dear?" asked Mrs. Campbell, with a ready symaathy.

"Yes," he murmured sadly, "all trace was lost of her for a time. Then she wrote that she was married and then came that last letter, her death warrant. Poor Lila—"

"Lila?" I breathed. My heart was pounding. "Was it—this warrant—from the Morgue?"

He nodded sadly. "Photographs were sent us, and there was no doubt of the horrible truth. We brought her home and she now

sleeps in Auburn, beside her mother. The stage was her hell, her doom. Do you wonder that I hate it?"

Should we tell him all we knew? The bell of the Old South Church sounded. It seemed like a knell for poor Lila. We did not tell him all the sad story—it would have been too cruel.

* * * *

I urged Howard to hurry on to Chicago and told him I should have to have a fortnight's holiday alone after that.

"Where are you going?" he asked, puzzled.

"Never mind. I don't want to see you for two weeks."

Was I ashamed of my home and my mother? No, God forbid! But the deception had commenced, and even he must not know that I was a country girl from Iowa, when his "stories" claimed so differently.

"All right," he conceded. "If you can trust me with your business affairs—I am only the cashier."

"How much can I draw?"

"You've some heavy orders for costumes."

"I must have one thousand dollars."

"Oh, that's easy," he said, giving his watch charm a twirl; "but the engagement here must be filled first."

There was over a fortnight yet before I could leave Chicago, and I telegraphed for mother to come to me from that little Iowa town which was my home. The next day we met, mother and I. How happy I was when we walked, unknown and unobserved, together through the grounds—mother and I!

The oratorio first rendered in my performance that evening was "The Creation," mother's favorite, and how that sweet face in the center inspired me!

I was glad when the last day of my engagement arrived. Mother now timorously ventured to come with me to the dressing-room.

"Why, Minza, you don't always have to whitewash that way, do you?"

The hare's paw and make-up box startled her.

"Yes, mother," I said wearily. "My real self is dead; I am a public statue now. Do not ever let the secret be known that Madame Helvina is your daughter. Let me always remain Minza—only Minza—to you."

The orchestra began and I took my seat amid applause. In oratorios the faces of an audience can always be studied more than in opera. That day I felt the opera glasses levelled at me with heartless scrutiny. When I began my first solo my eyes caught a face in the gallery.

The sight so startled me that I nearly broke down; my voice quivered; the orchestral tones seemed a din of confusion; my voice sounded distant and far away. I did not dare look again for those eyes. Could I be mistaken? No, they were there still, and I felt I could keep up no longer. A moment, and I sang to him with my heart aching, and felt those eyes upon me—it was Fred Burroughes. Did he recognize Minza?

Mother was startled when I came out.

"Why, Minza, child, what's the matter? Are you ill?"

"No, mother, I saw Fred Burroughes in the audience, and it quite upset me."

"Did he recognize you?"

"I don't know," I replied sadly.

"I hope not, Minza. Fred's life is a wreck.

He ran away from his wife and married an actress—now they are 'vaudeville' people, and he has served a year in prison for bigamy. They are not considered respectable in Smithville."

"But, mother, remember what he did for us!"

"Yes, my child, but we cannot help him now. It would ruin you were it known that—"

"Mother," I said firmly, "I will see him and thank him tomorrow."

CHAPTER XXVII

Home Once More

WE started upon our trip home in a few days. Every passing tree, I fancied, nodded a greeting as we sped away over the rolling prairies. How dear the broad green fields of the old State seemed! How rich and fertile and smiling the landscape appeared that bright June morning!

"Won't it be a surprise for the folks?" thought I, as we alighted from the Smithville train at dusk and started to walk home.

I rushed along the village street ahead of mother, for fear some of the old neighbors might recognize me.

Where was the dear old home? I did not see it nestling among the trees. A larger, new-fashioned house stood in its stead. Why had they not written to me, and why had they torn down the little cottage that I loved so well?

A tall lad was busy with a lawn-mower in the front garden.

"Does Mr. Robert Maxwell live here?" I inquired.

"Well, rather. Why, sister Minza, don't you know me? I'm Jim."

I hugged the young rascal until he gasped for breath.

"Where's father—and Tod?" I said all in one breath.

"Father's over at Rathbones.' She's very ill."

"Who? Tim? Children—Angela?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, she's had trouble enough to die," said Jim. "But come in. My! but, Minza, you wear fine dresses now," he continued, with an admiring brotherly glance.

It seemed impossible to realize that this was the little baby I had nursed. I could not take my eyes from his tall form.

"Now I must see father!" I exclaimed.

"I'll go and get him," said Jim. "You sit still, or don't you want to—" He stopped and looked at me.

"Yes, I'll go," and without taking off my cloak I started across the road under the

towering row of maples, and passed the sand pile where Angela and I used to play together.

Father saw me and rushed out.

"Minza, my daughter!" and the little gray-haired man embraced me tenderly. "She's very low," he whispered as we went in.

The room was dark; the light of a flickering lamp only was on her pale face; her cheeks were sunken, her lips parched. It was Angela! I took the thin hand and kissed it affectionately.

"Who is it—Mrs. Brady?" she whispered in a faint voice. "No, no, it's—it's—Minza."

With a cry she feebly placed her arms about my neck.

Angela, Angela, sister of my childhood! About the room were three little children, all Tim's, the alternate images of father and mother.

"You've come—come! O Minza! forgive—" continued Angela.

"Hush," I said, kissing the dry lips. "Now rest quietly."

A flood-tide of memories came back as I watched at that bedside. Would Tim come?

As I bent over the suffering woman I could see but little trace of that happy girlish face I had left behind me.

I held her in my arms and she slept. It was not long before I heard a noise at the door, and the children began to scamper to the kitchen.

"It's papa, it's papa!" they whispered in concert like frightened birds.

I was to meet him at last—the face I had so long sought in vain! My heart stood still.

Father gave me a pained look. I saw that Tim was drunk!

This, then, was the story of that pallid face and those frightened children. I laid Angela down gently.

"Don't go—go—Min—za he's only—ah, my God—"

I walked out into the other room. With a light in my hand I faced the drunken man.

Was *that* the face? "Tim!" I cried as he staggered toward me.

"Mush 'bliged, eh! Neighbors always in the way."

"Tim!" I said again, "it's Minza."

That seemed to sober him. What a wreck he was, though his bloodshot eyes flashed the old fire.

"Minza, Minza!" he cried. He sat down and wept like a child.

I shook his limp hand as he sat with bowed and abject head. I slipped back to the darkened bedroom and kissed Angela's sleeping face. Other neighbors came to take the watch at the sick bed, and I returned home.

The incident had saddened my home-coming.

I found Tod on the front veranda, proud as a king in his new scarlet band uniform.

"Minza, Minza!" he cried as he hung to me.

How swift in passing were those few days at home, and yet I was not sorry when they were over! Everything was so different!—there were so few familiar faces to greet me, and all in some way were changed.

We have no right to expect anything else, but we seem to forget that all things and all people change as time and age bring fruition and, alas, decay; and we find it very hard to realize that we cannot drop the thread of love or friendship, of business or social ties, and

take it up again unfrayed and unbroken. All were good and kind and loving, but in my pursuit of fame and wealth I had paid the price that all must pay if they go among strangers to struggle for "the great prizes of life."

The day before I was to leave I went to see Angela. She was much better and sitting up, although very weak. I had not seen Tim since that first meeting.

"Yes," she said faintly, "I shall get well now," but there was something strained in her expression and the tears were in her eyes as we said good-bye.

That afternoon we were aroused by the cries of the children across the street.

"Mother's dying, mother's dying!" the little ones cried, and we hastened across the road to assist and if possible to save her.

It was useless. Her apparent improvement had been but the deceitful rally of exhausted nature, which so often precedes dissolution, and we found the dying mother feebly kissing her three little girls and bidding them her last fond good-bye, while Tim stood weeping at the opposite side of the bed.

"I have killed her, Minza!" he cried in despair. "Oh, if I could die, too!"

There was one last glance as her eyes looked into mine and she smiled in recognition.

That was the last of earth. Angela, my own sister Angela!

She was buried at the old limekiln. What a funeral it was! My voice broke in those simple songs of childhood. My heart was too full. As we stood at the graveside the rustle of the leaves of the old walnut tree seemed a whisper from the dead. Underneath the very spot we used to sit as children Angela was buried—the place where I had first plighted my girlish troth to Tim!

CHAPTER XXVIII

I Leave America

THE American tour was soon completed. It was one of those lulls in life which leave a blank in memory. It was simply a dull routine—flitting in and out of those palatial hotels, which harbor only the birds of passage of these restless days.

Another year, and I was to make the great test of my powers in Wagner's opera at Bayreuth. I continued my study of the German language, the verbs and genders still puzzling me. At first there seemed nothing musical in the guttural tones of the German tongue. Of course I had many callers and made many new acquaintances, but I was much absorbed in my work. There are times when our energies wax and wane, and in one of the consequent lulls I met the Hon. David J. Hendershot, a young member of Congress. He was a keen, typical American, always entertaining and interesting. He told me at various times the story of his

life, and I found his early struggles were somewhat similar to my own.

"We have to seize opportunity by the forelock," he mused one day, "and play upon human nature as upon a harp. Do you know, we have a reflection of European aristocracy in America?"

"No," I replied warmly. "Our only aristocracy in America is Merit. A man must win distinction in business, letters, politics, music, art, journalism, or make money in some way before he is recognized as distinguished. Merit is our only royalty."

"You did not include the distinguished notoriety acquired by any fool of a crank. No," he continued, "you only know America generalized; I know it particularized. My first political success was due to the fact that I was the member of numerous societies and an all-round good fellow."

"And you have ridden those horrid society goats?" I broke in.

"Yes; you know it is a rage with us. We have hundreds of different secret societies whose mission may be social or benevolent;

and the tinsel and display of the Sir Knights of the Beanpole in lodge rooms and on public occasions indicate that humanity even in America has a love for the flash of royal robes and diadems. Nowadays there is scarcely an American man or woman who does not belong to from one to a dozen of these societies and lodges. We all wear buttons in our coat lapels and emblems of our degrees. A hod-carrier may be a Sir Knight or a High Royal Bumper in some secret organization. It is a great age of societies with us, and we all have some hobby which holds our interest and in which we usually hold office."

"You are not telling lodge secrets?" I asked, smiling.

"Oh, no," he said, with a laugh, "I am only taking a general view. Even our labor organizations invest their leaders with jewels and arbitrary power, perhaps modified by the action of a committee. I confess I am beginning to believe it would be best to take to the monarchial form of government."

"And you a member of the United States Congress!" I cried. "For shame!"

"Yes, but we must face facts and not theories. The absorption in making money and the tremendous prosperity of the great leaders for some years past has bred discontent, which is taken advantage of by ambitious men. The men all want to be masters; the strife is not so much a question of wages as it is an outburst against caste mingled with envy and jealousy on both sides. In politics we are taught always to plead for the workingman and the farmer in legislation. Well enough! We must look to their interests, but have they not just as much human greed as—"

"Yes," I interrupted, "but the poor man is made to feel the sting of poverty by the wealthy, who flaunt their diamonds in his face, thinking that everything is purchasable—"

"It is," he broke in. "For what do you struggle? For money! Why do the streets throng with people selling matches, fruit, shoe-strings? Why does the merchant fill his windows with rich displays of his wares? Why do the railroads spend millions for franchises and special legislation—why do trusts absorb all competition? To make money."

"You are too severe," I gently remonstrated. "Don't you know there are human motives aside from these? I never thought of salaries when I studied art. Music was my ambition."

"You looked forward to a condition brought about as a result of the money earned—when you could—you could—marry."

"Perhaps," I admitted reflectively.

"Yes, money was the medium to accomplish all this. Gold has been the god of humanity since the days of the children of Israel, when they worshipped the golden calf. We worship it for what it affords."

"Yes," I said bitterly, "but it brings little happiness."

"That's the philosophic way of putting it, but we all want it just the same."

"You seem to forget that there is such a thing as pure, self-sacrificing love in the gamut of human affection."

"Oh, no," he denied, laughing. "It breaks out occasionally, but there is always a motive at the back of it—nearly always."

"You are embittered, I am afraid," I told him, "and I think you do not realize that every

human heart has its good impulses. If distress occurs in one part of our country, how quickly the people respond to relieve the sufferings! If all human misery were actually realized by those able to relieve it, there would be little want. It is because we are in ignorance and do not comprehend—"

"And that ignorance is studied," he broke in. "People put cotton in their ears. Philanthropy is a profession. It becomes a rivalry of some sort or another. Of course we must applaud it, but to me there is more philanthropy in a kind word of sincere sympathy than in a gorgeous display of patronizing gifts."

"How about your secret societies?" I asked.

"There we have philanthropy developed in the highest degree," he said warmly. "We look to our brothers as brothers, and assist them under an oath-bound secrecy."

I saw that I could not convert him. I was captivated by the sincerity in his eyes.

We had many talks together, and although his ideas sometimes vexed me, he was always interesting. In fact, he "happened" in several different cities where I had engagements.

During my last week in New York he wrote me a letter stating that his re-election was now hanging in the balance and that he was in the midst of a heated campaign. The following day he came in quite unexpectedly.

"Madame Helvina," he exclaimed, "I am defeated. I am a bankrupt politician!"

"Why," I said, mystified, "the election does not occur till next week."

"Yes, but I leave this afternoon for the final hopeless struggle. My opponent is a wealthy man. True, he has no education, nor experience in legislative matters, but he has money. I find his handiwork everywhere; even those workingmen for whom I have always worked are deserting me. His funds mean more to them than my arguments in Congress. He is a successful business man, and his money floats his name everywhere."

"Are you not prejudiced?" I suggested.

"No," he insisted, "I am not. It is not the man, but the money, that will defeat me. His ignorance is boasted of as being one reason why he is in sympathy with the workingman. He has given parks and schools and

spent thousands in philanthropy to win this election. He is linked with rich people who have legislative interests to be looked after."

"Well," I sympathized, "you are clever enough to live without going to Congress."

"That is true," he said slowly, "but if I had been re-elected I was going to ask you to—to —to marry me."

The suddenness of the proposal rather startled me.

"I am afraid there may be a 'motive' at the back of this," I replied, using his favorite words.

"Don't taunt me," he pleaded. "Philosophy is one thing, love is another."

"You think I should marry political success, then?"

"Yes; all women like success—and successful men."

"You don't know a woman's heart," I replied seriously.

"No," he agreed, "that's what I'm trying to find out."

Just then Mrs. Campbell entered, and our *tete-a-tete* was over. He left soon after, with only ten minutes in which to catch his train.

In less than a hour Howard came into the room.

"Next week we sail for Europe," he stated.

"Yes," I replied meekly.

"You've had many proposals to marry. Does Hendershot belong on the list, too?" he asked ironically.

"Perhaps."

"Now, Helvy," he continued, using his favorite title, "there's no use in my holding back any longer. Have I served you well?"

"Howard, I can never repay you; you're not going to resign?"

"No, Helvy; I never want to leave you. That is the trouble. But now," he lowered his voice and came nearer to me, "I want to love you as well as serve you. I never found myself until I met you."

I turned away, for his earnestness had made me see in him another man.

"Howard," I said softly, "I can never marry."

"Do you love—"

"I cannot marry; I am wedded—wedded to my art."

"I believe," he said in a low voice, "that there is another reason."

How could I tell him the truth? That I was neither maid, wife nor widow for certain; I could not share the truth with him then.

"Don't, Howard," I pleaded, "you make me miserable."

"Then I ought to leave you, Helvy. I have worked and loved you, trembling lest you might forget your wedded art and marry another. At least, if you do not love me, promise me that you will not marry unless for love."

"I do promise, Howard." I looked him squarely in the face, but my eyes dropped at the light in his. "You will not leave me?"

"My life is yours," he said quietly, "and if we can't be married, I'll be your father or guardian or—"

"Be my big brother," I suggested. And we clasped hands on the pact.

The week after we sailed for Europe to take a short holiday in Switzerland before commencing our work.

The parting scene on the pier did not impress me as on my first voyage; it had lost its novelty and there is never the same keen observation the second time. As we passed the swinging bell-buoy at Sandy Hook it still blended its plaintive note with the weird song of the waves.

CHAPTER XXIX

Amid the Alps

ONE of the most fortunate moves of my life was in going to Switzerland when I did. It was merely chance; but on the heights of the Righi, at sunrise, as I was awakened by the long-sustained notes of the Alpine horn, it revealed to me the environment in which Richard Wagner had received his inspiration for the opening score of "Parsifal." The first act of the opera brings to mind that majestic vision of dawn on the Alps.

Clad in his leathern cap and fantastic red blouse, the herdsman sounded his thrilling refrain. Again it sounded, and then a screech in falsetto was followed by the Alpine song, which echoed down the valley.

The first glance through the window seemed like a dream of heaven. The soft, delicate purple haze tenderly bathed the landscape. Nature's great night veil was about to be lifted. The moon shone clearly in the heavens,

as if loath to leave the clear steel-blue sky. The snow-capped peaks in the distance were so mingled with clouds that it was difficult to distinguish the celestial from the terrestrial, but the snow had a grayer tinge, and even its purity faded beside the spotless white of the clouds.

We gathered on the topmost peak with half-opened eyes. Scarcely a word was spoken; for all were silent under the spell of the grandeur of the scene. Beneath, the great mountains were sleeping under a coverlet of fleecy, floating clouds. In the valleys a sea of mist hid the blue waters of Lowerz and Zug from view. On the distant crags, overhanging a precipice, the little Swiss chalets seemed to be sleeping like birds on the branch. The sun's first glow appeared between two jagged peaks: first a soft mellow pink, then spears of crimson shot out, as if sentinels to announce his coming. Slowly and majestically the deep red sphere rose from behind the twin peaks to awaken distant Pilatus from slumber. Black, horizontal bars of cloud shot across his face as if giving him a fiery red-purple glow of anger as he pushed

through the dark obstruction in his path. One could almost see the earth revolve while the heavens stood still. The great orb changed color till its dazzling disc glistened with intense white purity. Another bank of gloomy clouds interposed and the great monster seemed to shake himself as if to bore his way through; when they met the fiery purple tinge blending into orange blazed again like sparks from the forge of Vulcan. The clouds and mists scattered before his piercing rays, and like a blazing chariot, he continued his way through the heavens.

The shadows of the mountains clung to the dark purple peaks on the other side. They were soon dissolved by the glow of soft virgin light that seemed playfully to chase down the valley and give each peak its morning bath of golden sunshine.

We seemed close to God. Here Wagner had caught his inspiration for the overture of his story of the Holy Grail; here the Finite and Infinite seemed to touch.

The next day, in Lucerne, at breakfast, I read the following in a London paper:

STARTLING DISCOVERY.—What seemed to be the remains of a balloon and two men were found recently on the south side of the Wetterhorn by Alpine climbers. It is supposed to be the remains of a scientific expedition made some six years ago in an effort to cross the Alps with a balloon, which has never been heard from since.

Could this be Robert's balloon? I started at once to find out the real truth, and as I pictured poor Robert's dead face, his lonely fate haunted me.

I arrived at Grindelwald and made known my mission. At first I was regarded with suspicion. The remains had been brought down to this romantic little village, and were kept in the back room of a carpenter's shop till the inquest should be held. How I trembled as I entered! Was I alone with my dead? Only two skeletons and the ragged remains of a silk balloon! No rings or jewelry had been found. I tried in vain to find the least clue, and yet I felt that one of those skeletons was that of my husband. While I sat there over the crumbling remains, two Germans came in.

"That's the 'balloon," said one, as they examined it closely.

Among the effects found was a watch which I had not noticed, and the other German picked it up and looked at it minutely.

"Yes, this is his watch," he continued, "there is no doubt now."

I looked up in surprise. Did they know Robert?

"Who are they?" I asked breathlessly.

"Jean Valing and Jacob Stransen, madame. They left us six years ago and there is no doubt now as to their identity."

"Was not one of them an American?" I asked anxiously.

"No, both Germans."

"But might not one of them have been an American?" I persisted.

"No, they were both known to me from childhood. I remember well when they started on this fatal journey to make aerial observations on the Wetterhorn."

They seemed to be quite satisfied that they had established the identity of their friends, and took charge of the remains. It was not

Robert, and his fate was still a mystery, never, perhaps, to be solved.

Was the lost husband of my youth to still remain a haunting phantom?

Bob appeared to me in a dream that night, in his aerial car clad in a pure white robe, and took me away. Up—up—we went. The heights of Righi and Pilatus faded away; the earth seemed like a rolling ship, fighting among cloudy waves in a sea of space. We sailed on and on, and I begged him to return to earth. He shook his head and pointed to the great blinding sun and said with that old boyish, reliant look: "Hark, Minza, our wedding chimes are sounding."

He took me in his arms and kissed me—a husband's kiss. The chimes of the little village church echoed in my ears as I awoke. From earth came a plaintive note mingling with the rapturous dream symphonies of heaven.

CHAPTER XXX

I Sing at Bayreuth

THE next month found us at Bayreuth, hard at work rehearsing. The sleepy old Bavarian village enjoys rare distinction in its associations with the great Wagner. The little old gray houses and narrow streets; the old Opera house, with its weather-worn statues, and the Town Hall and Cathedral, the canal with its bridges—all these things group themselves together in memory. When I first passed the home of Wagner I felt that I was approaching a musical shrine. The white bust of King Ludwig II, his patron, occupies the position of honor in front of the house. The garden behind, with its gravel walks, was where Wagner walked, or sat and wrote. The square brick house and the house at one side are plain and unpretentious. At the back of the house is Wagner's grave.

I did not visit it that day. Every night—even before and after the opera—the city

resounded with voices rehearsing Wagnerian scores. The spirit of Wagner pervades everything at Bayreuth. His portrait and bust are to be found in every home. The children are taught his music as soon as they lisp.

At one o'clock each day the carriages are on the way to the Opera House, which stands on a hill a short distance from the town. It is a square, plain building of brick and stone, in which the stage occupies more room than the auditorium. It was built for the production of Wagner's operas. The orchestra and director are hidden from the audience beneath a large canopy in front of the stage, and can only be seen by the singers.

At four o'clock the trombones announce, with that German bugle-call which seems like an unfinished musical phrase, the time for beginning. The audience remain standing until the lights are lowered, and the clatter of unfolding seats sounds like a volley of musketry, followed by a breathless silence in the darkness. A long pause, then the slow, sustained notes are heard with an ever-increasing crescendo.

The solemnity of the scene makes it seem like a service of worship. The chords gather tenderly and gently—then a crash, and the wild rush of passion, reminding one of the lonely forest scene. The peal of thunder, the roar of rushing waters, the gentle rustle of leaves, the gleam of peaceful sunlight, are woven into rich symphony.

My mind was taxed to keep close to those puzzling musical phrases, to know where to commence and where to finish a tone, or when to hold the key given by the orchestra as they dashed to the next movement. The cue to the note always seemed contrary to what was expected; to plunge into space for a perilous accidental—it required every nerve, but I loved it; it was exhilarating.

My interpretation of Wagner's vocal score obtained at least the passive approval of the German critics, who had been so severe in their previous reviews.

My great musical ambition was now achieved, and I had conquered in my favorite *role.* Yet in the supreme moment, with encomiums of praise ringing in my ears, my heart ached

with loneliness—Elsa's plaintive lines seemed to express my own feelings.

Nearly every day I was visited by ambitious American girls asking me for advice as to a musical career. Their bright, fair faces were refreshing, and what pangs of regret I felt that they should desire to give up their young lives for fame, and sacrifice the contented serenity of happy wifehood and motherhood!

As if in contrast to these girls, a poor woman, once a famous stage celebrity—a popular *danseuse* in Paris—came to me for help. She reminded me of Lila and poor Mr. Burlingame, and with Mrs. Campbell's help I did what I could for her.

The only relaxations from the serious atmosphere of my German engagement were the visits of a young American newspaper man who came to interview me. He was rather homesick at first, and told me of his mother. This touched my heart, and we became good friends at once. He recalled certain incidents in my career—the "cooing dove" passage in "The Creation"—the red Elizabethan dress I wore at Chicago. He pleaded for "features"

to make his "copy" bright and breezy, even asking me outright if I hadn't a love episode or two that I could spare, as he thought my biography up to date was rather tame and abbreviated.

He little thought how his questions pained me, but his open, honest face reminded me of a brother at home, and I could not resent his curiosity.

"And you were never married?" he asked.

"I had rather say nothing. This printed slip contains my biography," I replied, trying to evade his direct questions.

"But I want some fresh stuff. Surely you've had some love affairs—why, I've had seven already, and I'm not married yet!"

The impudent little rascal! But his *naivete* fascinated me. As he left he looked straight into my face and said:

"Madame Helvina, I adore you, and I shall have that love story yet."

The festival passed like a dream, and Mrs. Campbell had taken such excellent care of me that I had not missed an engagement, and had only been in poor voice once or twice.

On the last day, as I gazed out of the dressing-room window at the throng of people gathered in front of the Opera House, and overlooking the beautiful valley, chequered with fields of ripening grain, I could not help regretting that my work there was over. The festival had been to me a life inspiration.

At dusk, the evening before I left Bayreuth, I visited for the first time the tomb of Richard Wagner. Enclosed by tall iron railings was a simple mound of earth, surmounted by a plain slab of granite. On the four sides the ivy clambered as if to protect the silent sleeper. White lilies drooped their pure blossoms at each corner. The sun had sunk behind the Opera House, Richard Wagner's real monument. The twilight gathered softly, and I felt as if in a vast cathedral.

From this spot can be seen, through a thicket of small trees, the summer house in which the master used to work. Their lengthening shadows seemed like silent sentinels gathering for the watches of the night.

As I stood in meditation, the sky had clouded; suddenly, the lightning flashed, the rustle of

leaves quickened with the stirring breeze, a crash of thunder pealed in terror as a climax, and died away with soft diminuendo down the valley. Here also the great composer caught fresh inspiration, always in soulful communion with Nature—he caught the very breath of the whirlwind and the rustle of the leaves and the tremendous undulations of thunder.

Great raindrops began to fall, and I reluctantly turned to leave with the *adagio finale* of "Parsifal" coming to me faintly:

"Beloved Saviour,
Blessed Redemption."

He was at rest, and his heart's yearning was satisfied. The storms and tempests of mortal life had passed, and he had joined in the heavenly symphonies, which have revealed the mysteries of life and love eternal.

CHAPTER XXXI

An Operatic Failure

MY dear Helvy, your position is secure. Three offers for engagements are here awaiting your acceptance," said Howard joyfully as he entered my room one morning.

"Where are they from, Howard?" I inquired eagerly.

"One from Paris and one from New York—"

"And the third?"

"Mine," he said, laughing.

The silly fellow! he was proposing again.

"The third is out of the question," I said with a smile, "and I propose we go to Brussels as arranged."

It was at Brussels that I met my friend, Arundel Sunderland, the composer. We had met a year or so before. He was a charming man, a clever composer, and a seasoned bachelor well in the forties.

"I am so glad to see you," he said, as we

shook hands, "and I hope I may see much of you during your stay here."

Howard had arranged various interesting excursions for me, but he did not look pleased when Mr. Sunderland joined us nearly every day.

"By the way, Madame Helvina," said Arundel one day, "I have just finished the score of my first grand opera, 'Evangeline,' and I have created the title-*role* in honor of a great American prima donna."

This was indeed a fascinating distinction. He described to me in detail the scenes, the plot and action, and played some of the arias to give me an idea of the theme.

Arundel was so absorbed in his work that he could think and talk of nothing else, and I could scarcely wait for an opportunity to study the score.

First impressions are difficult to dissipate. When I heard the opening measures of "Evangeline," my opinion was formed. The harmony was certainly massive, but—could I tell him?—it was but an echo of Wagner with a reflection of Gounod's "Romeo and Juliet." The title

role was simply unsingable. I tried my best to put soul into it, but the opera was too much of a polished imitation of the great masters to give play for a finished and original conception. It lacked inspiration and continuity, and seemed more of a compilation of chords and arias than an opera.

"How do you like it?" he asked breathlessly, his black eyes sparkling.

"I have not been able to go over it fully," I replied, evasively.

"Will you help me produce Evangeline?"

"Thank you, I will try, and indeed I feel grateful to you for the honor you do me."

"I had you in my mind, madame, as I wrote every measure."

I hardly knew how to tell him the truth. In light opera he was clever and a hard worker, and his triumph would undoubtedly come some day in grand opera. But it was not to be found in the score of "Evangeline."

I rehearsed and rehearsed, but it was of no use. It seemed like an operatic millstone. I tried to express this to him, but I could not make him understand.

"And you will take the title *role?*" he persisted one day, after I had wearied myself with the unsingable score.

"I am afraid," I said hesitatingly.

"Don't desert me now," he pleaded.

"Well, I will do my best for you, but—"

"Many thanks for that kind assurance, Madame Helvina," he replied. "With you, I know Evangeline's future is assured."

In a few weeks we were in the midst of the final rehearsals. The public little realizes the immense amount of hard work and drudgery required to stage a new opera.

The first night arrived.

The overture began. My nervousness increased, as even the opening song was unmanageable. The love-making of the first act passed off smoothly enough, excepting for a few blunders of the "prop" man, and that when one of the "boats" refused to float majestically the pit and gallery were amused. In the second act, during a pathetic search for missing Gabriel, I tried my best to make music of the score, but at the most unfortunate moment the tenor broke on his high C and there was confusion.

I rallied the chorus on the *ensemble*, but felt that the opera had failed.

With a flush of excitement Arundel came to me after the *finale*.

"Madame Helvina, I can never thank you enough; you have carried the opera," and he led me before the curtain to receive the acknowledgments of the audience, who were indulging in the usual first-night enthusiasm.

The newspaper critics next morning confirmed my fears; they said I was unequal to the *role* and that my voice was rapidly failing. The opera had only a short run, as the managers were panic-stricken. It was rather an inglorious sequel to my continental success.

Howard was furious and had no sympathy for Arundel, who was rather crushed.

"I will make them regret it yet," hissed Arundel. "If it were not for you, I should not care, but you sacrificed yourself for me."

"Oh, no, no," I protested. "We must expect ups and downs and be ready to make sacrifices."

"Would you make another sacrifice for me?"

"What is that?" I inquired.

"Will you be my wife? You surely intend

to retire from the stage some day? Let us live together for the divine art."

"It can never be," I told him.

"Why?" he demanded.

"I shall never marry."

"Let us always be friends, then," he said gently, "and forget what I have said."

"Thank you," I replied, "I cannot afford to lose my friends," and I gave him my hand.

"You will remain my life's inspiration," he said earnestly.

CHAPTER XXXII

Professional Envy and Feminine Spite

DURING the following weeks I was surprised by a visit from the young American newspaper man whom I had met at Bayreuth.

"Madame Helvina," he exclaimed after greeting, "I've got a bully good love story."

"When did you arrive?" I asked.

"This morning, madame, and the article would be just right if you'd only allow me a wee bit of romance to work up. I can fix it. Please do." His eyes danced with real delight and enthusisam.

"No, my boy, my life is my own. And I don't like deception."

"Yes, but this is a corker—better than stolen diamonds—or getting married—or a divorce—it's a husband in the air!"

I paled under his glance. Did he know the truth? I must find out.

"What nonsense have you in your head

now?" I inquired, trying to seem amused. "Come and see me after rehearsal. I cannot remain to talk now."

After he had gone I wondered what had suggested the idea to him.

During this engagement my first real trouble with the rival prima donnas, of whom I was one, occurred. Quarrels behind the scenes furnish lively green-room gossip, but to me they were most revolting, and I had hitherto successfully avoided them.

"I will not sing with Helvina." It was Marie Almster talking to the manager in my hearing. Hoping to avoid a quarrel, I paid no attention to any of her remarks. "She has snubbed me and has talked too much," she continued.

"You will not help matters any by not singing with her," protested the manager, "but you will injure me."

"You ought to know better," she stormed, "than to sign with that American upstart. She thinks herself too fine and comes of a *bourgeoise* family."

I could stand it no longer.

"The young lady will not have the opportunity of singing with me," I interposed.

"What!" gasped the manager. "You, too, Madame Helvina!"

"I will sing an extra solo," I said, "and you can cut the duet in the concert program."

"But it will be too much of a strain on your voice," he reproved.

"Never mind; the program shall not suffer by this unfortunate affair."

"This is not the end, Madame Helvina," said the little German lady, looking at me fiercely.

It was only an ordinary stage quarrel, but somehow the threat of Marie Almster worried me.

The events of the day had put me in a most miserable frame of mind, and when I arrived home a cablegram was handed me. Another offer for an American engagement! thought I, as I tore it open, but instead of that the cruel message met my eyes:

"Tod died this morning—will be buried Wednesday.

"MAXWELL."

As the broken arc of the little home circle appeared to me in my grief, how empty and vain seemed my struggle for fame. Tod, little Tod! how his face haunted me, as I lingered in memory over the last time I had seen him!

I longed to start for home at once to comfort mother in her deep sorrow.

"No," came the cruel demand of business. "Your engagements must be fulfilled."

Only a few hours in a distant land to mourn a dead brother! How every scene at that death-bed was pictured, and how vividly it brought back memories of little Joe. One more grave on the hill!

My eyes, red from weeping, were covered with powder that night as I threw myself into my task with an aching heart.

The minor passages were in tune with my heart, as in fancy I joined our grief-stricken household.

My lips were sealed to all but Mrs. Campbell, who had, indeed, proved herself a true mother to a wandering singer, and had been my constant companion since those student days in Paris.

"I must return at once to America, Howard," I said one day.

"My dear Helvy," he gasped, "we are just on the point of signing the greatest contract you have ever had."

"Howard," I repeated, "I must go."

"Well," he said philosophically, "I suppose one can never reckon on a woman's whim."

I was determined to go. It was one of those times when the whole world seemed as nothing compared with the loved ones at home.

"Very well, then," Howard finally assented, "we will sail next week."

Marie Almster sang with me the last evening I appeared in opera prior to sailing for America. In a quarrel scene she actually became in earnest and savagely bit my arm. I screamed out in pain and rushed from the stage. The director was thunderstruck, and it looked as if the opera would fall in a crash during that duet. Gene Paroski, who sang that night, was waiting in the wing for his cue. He saw what had happened and took in the situation at a glance. He hurried on before his cue, and the director, seeming to divine his motive, held up the

orchestra to finish a phrase, and gave the signal for the opening bars of Gene's aria. While the orchestra were finding their places he kept a single violin playing an impromptu interlude. Madame Almster stood as if dazed when Gene made his unexpected appearance, but, as if it had been a part of the "business," he unceremoniously dragged her from the stage.

It was evident that she had deliberately planned to mar the performance and to injure my musical reputation.

Once in the dressing-room she was furious and raved like a mad woman.

"I hate her!" she shrieked "I hate her!"

Fortunately her understudy was able to complete the few remaining numbers. I was compelled to continue, although my arm was stinging with pain. I never heard Gene Paroski sing better.

The audience, little realizing the tempest raging behind the scenes, gave us the most enthusiastic reception of the season.

Gene Paroski and I had a longer talk than usual that night.

"When did you notice anything wrong tonight?" I asked.

"Not until she attacked you," he replied. "Her face looked like that of a maniac, and I was determined to stop her and save the opera, if I had to fling her into the pit."

It was a nine days' excitement in operatic circles, but the sensation subsided without an open scandal.

The preparations for returning to America proceeded rapidly, and among the trophies which I carried back was a street piano organ—a hurdy-gurdy. I had become quite fascinated with them in London and on the continent, where my morning slumber was broken by the refrain of the popular airs that come and go with each generation. I must confess these airs had a piquant charm for me after a concentrated study of Wagner's music.

"Howard, I want a hurdy-gurdy to take back to America," I had said one day.

He was astonished.

"There is no explaining these women," he murmured audibly. But he bought the hurdy-gurdy, nevertheless.

As I stood upon the deck of the steamer which was about to sail, Hal Cogswell, the irrepressible young reporter I had met again at Bayreuth, came running up the gangway.

"Deny it—deny it—a lie and a slander! Sue them, or I'll kill them!" he cried.

"What has happened?" I asked.

"Read this," he exclaimed, handing me a London newspaper with a marked paragraph.

It was one of those cheap publications edited by a masculine "Lady Sneerwell," whose specific object was to probe into the privacy of homes and to retail scandal. I read:

"IT LOOKS STRANGE.—Madame Helvina's sudden departure for America, after signing contracts for numerous engagements, occasions considerable speculation in theatrical circles. Some intimate that her managers are fearful of their bargain and ask to be released because her voice is failing and her acting lacks the fire and vivacity of youth; other assert that there is a scandal with the tenor and that they are going to be married in America as soon as he secures his divorce. Madame Helvina has a large circle of admirers, who will regret this cloud upon her artistic career."

During the whole of my life this was the first time a suspicion had been breathed against my character. That was the one thing I held dearer than life. It had been burned into my very soul by mother that without purity a woman has lost her greatest defense.

"Who could have been so cruel and malicious?" I said with tears starting.

"I suspect Almster," said Hal, "and if you will give me authority, I will make her sweat blood for this cowardly trick."

"Hal," I said, "you are a good boy."

"And you're my queen, Madame Helvina. I'm hanged if I don't feel like fighting a duel with the cowardly editor.

"I'm going to stay here a month longer any way, and see this thing through."

The bell sounded an interruption.

"Good-bye, Hal," I said, looking into his earnest boyish face.

"Good-bye. Remember you've got a friend in me forever," he said, as he hurried through the surging crowd. The last I saw of him, he was waving the Stars and Stripes from among the throng on the pier.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Some Domestic Tragedies

I MUST have another week's holiday alone," I said to Howard the day we reached Chicago.

He seemed to suspect that there was a secret, but Mrs. Campbell satisfied his curiosity in some way, and he grumbled an assent.

How consoling it was to feel my mother's thin and trembling arms about my neck as we buried our faces in each other's shoulder and wept together after my arrival home.

"Where is Tim? Is he still living?"

Mother seemed to anticipate the inquiry.

"Yes, but he is a wreck—an invalid—and his children are so devoted to him! Will you see him? He sits every afternoon in his chair under the maples, where you children used to play."

We passed across the street. A little daughter with golden curls, the very image of Tim, wheeled him out in his chair. His face was pale

and wan, and yet how spirituelle! The fire of youth's ambition was quenched; it was a peaceful, pallid face.

His countenance brightened with that familiar old smile as we approached.

"Oh, it's Mrs. Maxwell, I know. How kind of you! But who's—"

"It's Minza, Tim!" I cried, going toward him.

He did not seem to recognize me. He turned toward me.

"Don't you know me, Tim?" I continued.

"Minza, little Minza of long ago!" he cried. "God bless you! Come nearer and let me touch you."

"Here I am, Tim," I said, taking his hand. "Why don't you look at me?"

"Haven't they told you, Minza?"

"Told me what?"

"I am blind." His voice broke. "I can never see you again."

I knelt and he placed his hands on my head, just as in the old days when we were children.

"Such pretty hair, Minza!"

Blind! O love of my childhood, how my heart went out to him!

His affliction obliterated the memory of our last meeting, and I could only remember the Tim of my youth. There was the old familiar wave of the hand, the twitch of the brow, that even time and trouble had not effaced.

It was touching to see how dependent he was on the two children who remained at home, while the eldest, a girl prematurely old for her years, earned a living to support her blind father.

Mother left us happily talking together under the maples, and when I returned to her she told me the pathetic story of how Tim had lost his sight.

After the death of Angela he was ill for some time, and he made a desperate effort to conquer his appetite for drink. He was successful, but scarcely had that dark cloud disappeared when his sight was threatened. In spite of all that the most eminent oculists could do, he returned home—just one year after Angela's death—hopelessly blind.

He had paid a heavy penalty for those years of dissipation.

The eldest girl, whom Miss Riser declared to be "the smartest pupil who ever went through the district school," put her young shoulder to the wheel, and secured employment in a large town nearby as a clerk. They were expecting her home the next day. Her father was very proud of her, and even my brother Jim sang her praises to me.

"Zella is so like you," Tim said to me one day. "She is a good girl and ambitious to be somebody. She has a real business head."

That afternoon under the maples it was all decided. Zella was to go with me to study music.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Tour in America

WHEN I returned to Chicago I had quite made up my mind that my duty as a daughter was greater than my career as a prima donna.

"It must be my farewell tour," I said firmly to Howard.

"But, Helvy, they will laugh and make sport of you. The newspapers will consider it all a joke."

"I do not care," I said defiantly. "I owe a duty to my—" I stopped suddenly.

"To whom?" he demanded.

"To my parents," I replied.

"Now, Helvy," he entreated, "put aside that idea. It is for their interest as well as—"

"No, Howard," I put in wearily. "I must retire. The ties of blood are stronger than the ties of art or salaries. Besides, the conductor's *baton* has become to me a black demon. I live,

move and breathe under its magic spell on the stage and forget my duty as a daughter."

"But the worst is now over. We could give concert tours."

"Yes, but, as in the opera, one false move, one wrong breath, and the orchestra are chasing away with the thread of harmony snapped. The flash of the wand has become so irksome to me that I fear I shall lose my mind if I continue."

"No, no," he protested quickly. "You need rest, then you will be all right. I had arranged for four seasons ahead."

The stage had suddenly grown repulsive to me. The atmosphere of the dressing-room was oppressive, with its dark make-up for Carmen; with the white bottles and blonde braided wigs for Elsa and Marguerite. They now seemed like heavy armor to a worn and weary knight. Besides, the recent events at home unsettled me. Mother and father were growing old, and I felt that I owed a duty to them, and ought to give up my selfish ambitions. I had tried before I left for Chicago to get them to accompany me.

"No, Minza," said father, "we used to do it when you and mother gave your concerts, but we are too old now."

I thought that my determination was fixed when we started on that farewell tour and I bade good-bye to the familiar scenes in the opera houses we were visiting. But we had not been out many weeks before an event took place to modify my decision. My old rival, Almster, was making a tour of America in light opera. She was having good success, had had her diamonds stolen, had been married several times, and the newspapers bristled with spicy items about the "captivating German prima donna."

Howard had evidently been studying womankind and now kept me informed as to her movements. The *furore* she caused was irritating, and yet I wanted to read the accounts of her tour and its success. One day, as if in triumph, Howard brought me a paper. "Read that!" he shouted.

It was an interview with Almster, giving her opinion of Madame Helvina.

She stated:

"Poor Helvina is now on her farewell tour. She is nearly sixty years of age, and a grandmother. She bears her age remarkably well, but her voice is not what it has been; even prima donnas must grow old."

There was a sting in this that startled me, and the old resentment and rivalry once more asserted themselves. I was willing to retire from the field with my modest little wreath of laurel, but not under fire.

"Howard," I said, "have all the bills changed and take off that farewell tour line. I intend to remain at work a little longer."

Howard was in high glee. "Bless you, Helvy," he cried, "you're a trump, and a sensible woman, after all. We'll show that fussy little busybody yet!" he said defiantly as he hurried out.

Later it flashed upon me that Howard might have been the author of that interview. But I could not change my mind again.

Before the close of my Chicago engagement I received a letter from a firm of lawyers, stating that, if I made affidavits affirming specific knowledge of the death of Robert

Burnette, they would secure the insurance money due on his life.

"Connor & Cogswell" read the letter-head, with "Harold S. Cogswell" engraved in the right-hand corner as junior partner. He had evidently left his newspaper work to become a lawyer. I remembered the wonderful newspaper story he had ferreted out and confronted me with at the dock before I had sailed to America. He had followed the clew even into the new profession he had taken up, and I wondered if he now knew the real truth. Would my real history be revealed to the world?

I wrote stating that I held no proofs of my husband's death, and signed for the first time in many years my real name, "Minza Burnette."

CHAPTER XXXV

The Old Hearthstone Vanishes

TELEGRAPHIC news! How the secret sorrows and joys of life are revealed by the dots and dashes as they flash from the telegraph operator's fingers hundreds of miles away!

In the midst of our triumphal tour on the Pacific Coast, when there appeared to be a rift in the clouds of my life, I received a telegram:

"Father very ill. Come—Mother."

All my dates were cancelled, and the suspense of that journey home I can never forget. The surging crowds in a railway train seldom think of the various emotions mingled with its roar, or of the heavy hearts reflected in the sad eyes of passengers. Should I reach home in time?

All was still about the old house as I entered —there was not a sound.

"Father, father!" I cried.

My only answer was my mother's sobbing as she met me. Her eyes told the story.

"Minza," she said, "he is at rest," and bowed her tired head upon my shoulder.

I could only say "My dear, dear mother," and caress with tense fingers the soft gray hair of the little mother whose firm, helpful courage had broken down at last. At first I could not cry; my heart was hot within me, and I fear rebelled against God. I comforted mother all I could, but I felt that I myself was beyond comfort or comforting until I, too, could find relief in tears.

At the funeral, however, when the soft notes of "Just as I Am, without One Plea" (father's favorite hymn) burst forth, I completely broke down. The weak, trembling and aged voice of the minister, dear old Mr. Frazer, tried to comfort our grief-stricken hearts.

The Grand Army of the Republic, the Masons, in their regalia and white gloves, gathered to do honor to a dead comrade. The last sad rites were over, and never will the soft minor refrain of Pleyel's hymn, sung by the

Masons in a husky voice as they marched around the grave, fade from my memory.

The final burial salute was fired by the old army comrades.

Who does not remember how that vacant place at the head of the table, that empty chair at the fireside, the memory of a kindly voice, silent forever, changes a cheerful home into a lonely tarrying place?

"Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead
And all but he departed."

"Mother," I said a few days after the funeral, "we must go away tomorrow."

"My dear," she replied sadly, "I am too old; don't tear me away from my loved ones. While I live I want to be near my boys and Robert."

"But, mother, you have the living to look after. Jim is going to finish at college, and you must come with me."

"Minza, let us cease the struggle for ambition that I taught you." She paused. "Oh," she moaned, "you do not know

how I loved your father. My heart is—is—" She quite broke down.

"Yes; but, mother, we must face life again. Let it be together."

It was a dreary, windy day when we closed the old home and turned the key in the door. The old maples sighed; the hammocks swung sadly under the evergreens; it was autumn again.

A last glance at the window across the way, and I saw Zella standing by her father's side. Poor blind Tim could not see us, but his hand waved a farewell, and we began life over again —mother and I.

The journey back to the coast was a sad one. I bent every energy in trying to make mother interested in the scenery and to absorb her in the eventful musical season. Her love for music was great, but her heart was indeed broken, and only for Howard she would have remained alone at the hotel many times while I was in the opera house. She regarded Howard as a real friend, and I never could forget his solicitous care for her. But she never rallied from the blow of father's death.

One night, when I had returned late from the opera, she became unconscious. A doctor was called, but still I felt no particular anxiety, as I had nursed her through these attacks many times before. The doctor's face became very grave. Suddenly the sleeper woke, and began singing in a weak, trembling voice,

> There's a land that is fairer than day,
> And by faith we can see it afar.

"Mother, mother," I protested, "you must not exert yourself so much."

There was a strange light in her eyes, and again she became drowsy and unconscious.

Howard was called, and her breath came faster and faster. The livid lips turned purple, and she responded but feebly to my impulsive kiss. She looked so pleadingly into my face with those deep blue eyes as the death-light glowed in them!

"She is dying!" I cried. "Mother, mother, don't leave Minza. O doctor, she must not die, she must not die."

"We cannot do anything now," he replied gently.

"Good-bye, Minza," she said almost in a whisper, as I bent over her to catch the words. "Good-bye, my child; remember—remember—"

Again she sang in a feebler voice,

"There is a land—"

The line was never finished; a weary sigh, and I was motherless as well as fatherless. The family hearthstone had vanished.

Even Howard seemed cruel in coming for directions. No sleep could I bring to my eyes; tears would not flow; and hour by hour the terrible realization grew upon me—mother was gone.

The flickering shadows of the lowered light seemed to give life to the sleeping face, but when I kissed her ice-cold lips the truth came to me—I was alone with mother, and I had torn her from her old home!

All at once the tension in my brain gave way and I felt that I was mad. Let them bury two bodies in that little Western cemetery, and let me sleep with mother. I would end my existence.

"Helvy, Helvy," asked Howard, coming in to find me thus, "what are you doing here?"

"I wish I were dead!" I moaned.

"I, too, grew to love her as mother," he said, softly, pointing to the quiet form in the casket; "let me just take your hand."

"O Howard, I cannot live now," I pleaded; "let me die."

"Die! Live, Helvy, live! What would *she* say?"

He had touched the right chord, and tears came to my relief.

Brother Jim had been married only a few weeks and came from his honeymoon there with his pretty wife. I loved the boy, but he and his bride were wrapped up in each other, and she was able to comfort him. In the great hour of grief, brother and sister seemed to have drifted apart.

My future seemed a blank. I felt as though I could not tear myself away from that new-made grave, and from the holy benediction of a mother's love.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Insane Aeronaut

A FEW days later I was surprised to receive a visit from the irrepressible Hal Cogswell, the hustling reporter, more recently a lawyer, who had declared that he would yet surprise the secret of "Madame Helvina's" love life.

"I have learned the secret of your life, Madame Helvina, since we met in Europe; and your kindness to me made me resolve to help you, and I've found him."

"Who?" I asked listlessly.

"Why, Mr. Burnette," he replied.

I shivered.

"Don't you want to hear of your hus—"

"My husband!"

When we were in the house he told me the story.

In a secluded mad-house in Germany, Hal believed he had found poor Robert Burnette.

"There is no doubt of it, Madame Helvina.

I came upon it quite accidentally while reading an official report of the patients. This poor fellow was found near a collapsed balloon, a raving maniac. Although he mumbles in German, there is no doubt in my mind that he is your husband."

"Yes, but how do you know?" I inquired, interested.

"Because the keeper told me he constantly repeats one name, 'Minza, Minza,' and talks of balloons."

My poor Robert!

"And is there any hope?"

"No, I am afraid not, but if you will allow me, I will secure the necessary papers and bring him home."

I decided there and then that he should bring my husband home to me.

"Will you go with me to see my blind schoolmate?" I said after we had finished our talk.

We went across the street, and he took poor Tim's hands and spoke very tenderly of his affliction.

"Well, it's worth losing your eyes to have such a friend as Madame—"

I hushed him. "My name is Minza," I whispered.

"Yes, Minza," he echoed.

Just then Zella came out. I had heard of love at first sight, and surely it was before me!

"Zella, Zella, you here!" cried Hal, going toward her to shake hands.

"This is my home, Hal," she responded, "and this is my father," pointing to Tim.

Evidently they had met before; it was not love at first sight, after all, for Hal had been here for a clue and found *the* girl.

The young couple soon forgot Tim and me. After a time Zella left Hal's side and beckoned me to come with her into the house, leaving Hal with Tim.

She threw her arms about my neck and kissed me. "Why, my dear," I asked innocently, "what can be the matter? Hal hasn't asked you to marry him, has he?"

* * * *

Hal left on his mission and I returned to complete my engagements and continue my season's work.

After mother's death Howard was especially kind and thoughtful of me. As a man, he never seemed so close to me before. Traits in his character revealed themselves in those few days of grief and sorrow, that in all the previous years of our business associations had not been drawn upon. He was patient with me in all my whims and always tender in speaking of mother.

"Helvy," he said earnestly one day, "I will never bother you with love pleadings; I am simply your manager; but remember you are the only woman I have ever loved or ever will, and some day if you ever find you return that love, we will be married."

"But, Howard, you do not understand. It can never be. I'm—I'm—married!"

"What!" he cried, his face paling. "And you did not let me know? Oh, Helvy, Helvy, how could you?"

"Howard," I replied, "I was married before I knew you," and I told him the story of poor Robert.

"Brave little woman!" he ejaculated when I had finished. "And that young rascal of a Hal

has gone to bring you back an insane husband! But, Helvy, you know his insanity releases you."

"Legally it may, but morally it does not. Howard, I am a wife."

"I respect your convictions; but, Helvy, you are wearing yourself out with troubles that cannot be helped. Let me—"

"The standing offer, Howard," I broke in, trying to smile.

"Now that I know the real truth," he said sincerely, "I think I can be a better friend, although I may never be your husband."

"We'll seal the compact," I said, taking both his hands in mine, and we stood looking into each other's eyes, as we had never looked before.

Some months afterward I received the first letter from Hal:

"I swore I would not write to you until my mission was accomplished," he wrote. "You have no idea of the governmental red tape to be gone through to extradite an insane man. They want his pedigree back several generations and yours as well. I fixed one up for you, with dates and ancestors that may surprise

you, but you will have to swear to it all now, or I shall be in a pickle. We sail on the 16th inst. I have visited your husband several times, and the poor fellow keeps on moaning 'Minza, Minza,' so plaintively."

I had made arrangements with a private sanatorium nearby for my husband's safe keeping and could scarcely await the time for his arrival.

We were to take a holiday—Howard and I—a holiday to meet my mad husband.

On the day the steamer arrived in New York, Hal telegraphed to us when to meet them at the station in the little Iowa town where the asylum was situated. They did not arrive on the train as expected, and we returned to the hotel feeling somewhat anxious.

An hour later there was a knock at the door of my room. It was Hal, who appeared unannounced, as handsome and enthusiastic as ever.

"We are here," he whispered. "Be brave, Madame Helvina, be brave."

The suspense was at an end, and I was to meet my lost husband.

He was then in a room at that very hotel. Two stalwart Germans stood outside in the dark corridor as I approached with Hal and opened the door of the room.

There he was crouching in the corner, eating his dinner like a wild beast. This my husband! His mad eyes looked up—strangely unfamiliar. What a greeting for man and wife after twelve years' parting. He rose to his feet. How tall and towering he seemed as the light from the little window shone full on his face!

"My God!" I shrieked.

I could not be mistaken. It was not Robert. It was an utter stranger.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A Pretty Wedding

HOWARD and Hal rushed into the room at my shriek, fearing that something had happened.

I did not know whether to be happy or sad, but Hal was quite crushed. After so much expense and work, the madman proved to be the wrong man; but Howard looked relieved. The only explanation we could offer was that this poor madman was Robert's companion, and that it was the name of the ill-fated balloon which he moaned so continuously. I was still to be left in uncertainty, and the unfortunate man was taken back to Germany.

I tried to console Hal in his disappointment, but he was silent and soon after left.

I was considerably surprised, therefore, to receive the following note some weeks after:

"Dear Madame Helvina: Will you and Mr. Wittaker attend our wedding? Smithville, December 16—Zella and I. Hal."

It was an abrupt wedding invitation, unique in its way, and altogether a surprise.

There was something refreshing and stimulating in meeting those two young lovers who were so soon to be man and wife. Their happiness was infectious. Zella was prettier than ever.

Tim was happy, and cheerfully announced: "You see, Minza, I give up my daughter, but receive in return a son. Minza, they are so happy together; it quite reminds me of our—"

"Hush, now," I said hastily, "you should not be telling secrets of old playmates."

Howard had heard it and naturally put two and two together.

"And so you two were playmates in days gone by?" he inquired.

"In a way," I answered, trying to change the subject. "By the way, have you seen to the minister's carriage and the flowers for the wedding, Howard?"

"I think so—or Mrs. Campbell has."

The two younger girls, Lilian and Jessie, had returned home from the conservatory at which they studied, so that they might be

present for the wedding that evening. The service was short and simple. Hal and Zella stood beneath a bower of fresh flowers close to Tim. The bride in her beauty reminded me of Angela—sister of my childhood—and it seemed cruel to think that poor blind Tim could not see his sweet-faced child. The bridegroom fully realized the solemnity of the occasion and repeated his responses several times, as if to emphasize the fact that he was being married in earnest; he nearly upset the solemnity of the ceremony.

After the final words had been spoken I was more cheerful; I began to feel that life was not so gloomy, after all, and I played the Wedding March from "Lohengrin."

Tim was placed at the head of the table, with Zella and Hal on one side, and myself and Howard on the other.

The young folks left for their new home in Chicago, for Hal persisted in calling himself a lawyer. Mrs. Campbell, in her kind, motherly way, had taken charge of all the arrangements for the wedding, and as she was growing old and the incessant traveling began to tell upon

her, she decided to remain at my old home at Smithville and look after Tim and his girls.

"Dear Auntie," I said, fondly kissing her, "how can I ever thank you?"

"Dinna try it, my bairn," she answered, adding with a twinkle, "You will not need me always."

"I always will," I insisted.

"Well, well, we shall see," she replied, as she left the room.

"Now that was a pretty little wedding," said Howard, as we went to the old home together. "Wasn't it, Helvy? And it put another idea into my head."

"What is that?" I asked with a yawn.

"You would look so charming going through the same ceremony with—"

"Howard, how can you ask me?"

"My dear," he said firmly, "I must insist; you are unreasonable. There is no doubt whatever that Robert Burnette is either insane or dead, and you are free to marry anybody you like—even me, for instance."

"Howard," I remonstrated, "I have a conscience."

"Yes," he agreed, "and I have a love which—"

"Howard, you are forgetting our compact."

"Bother the compact! I was a fool to make it; you keep me at arm's length, and only use me as a business machine. I won't stand it any longer. If you only loved me—"

He abruptly rose and crossed to the open window. I had never seen him in such a mood. His fine eyes were ablaze with light; his voice trembled.

"Howard," I whispered, crossing the room and gently placing my hand on his shoulder, "I—I do—love you, if I know what love is, but duty—"

My words seemed to electrify him.

"You mean it?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, Howard," I answered, "but we cannot marry; I am a wife until I am proved to be a widow."

We said "good-night"—rather soberly for lovers.

That night I dreamed of the heavenly choir. The harps and lyres flooded space with delicious harmony, and angels and archangels and the spirits of the redeemed sang in perfect but

utterly unfettered accord. Each mortal sang of his own life: some were light and merry; others were sad and mournful, and sang in plaintive tones, but the last chord always revealed the earthly fortunes of the singer—the triumphant major resounded the record of a life of peace, joy and happiness; the weird minor echoed the experiences of a past full of grief, pain and sorrow.

When my turn shall come, what chord shall I sustain at the foot of the Great White Throne?

CHAPTER XXXVIII

The Heart Chord

MY dream had affected me strangely, as all such visions had throughout my childhood, and it haunted me all the next day.

Howard came down from the hotel to tell me that he would have to return to the city that evening, but that I could remain in Smithville a month longer if I so desired, before starting in on the season's work.

A month alone without Howard! It was a dreary prospect to look forward to. It brought about the realization of how empty my life was without Howard. He had been so near to me all through the years, sharing alike in triumphs and sorrows, that I had taken his friendly counsel and manly arm as a matter of course. Through all my career I had never considered him as a lover, although I knew him to be a vital part of my life. It all burst upon me now. All the other men in my life had

been but incidents—even Bob himself—they represented Romance; Howard alone stood for abiding Love. But how could I marry him?

Just then a letter was brought me. It read as follows:

"My dear Madame Helvina: I have just composed a new song, of which you are the heroine and your life its inspiration. I have dedicated it to you, and hoping you will pardon my seeming presumption and that we may soon see you again in London,

I remain, sincerely your friend,

"ARUNDEL SUNDERLAND.

"P. S.—A copy of the song was sent by this post."

"Has the song arrived?" asked Howard, when he had read the letter.

"No, but I'm anxious to go over it," I said.

"Yes, so am I," said Howard, with sarcasm. "It's sure to be good if it's Arundel's. I fancy I can see him here with his single eyeglass glaring at you like a one-eyed owl."

I could not help smiling a little at Howard's odd parallel.

"'Your life its inspiration,'" he quoted from the letter. "Well, I know it does not strike a minor chord, anyway."

"How do you know, Howard?" I asked.

"I do not know positively, but I feel it; besides the critics have already commented upon the peculiarity of his compositions."

"Well, here's the song," I said, as a roll was handed to me by Lilian, who had just returned from the post-office.

As I took it, my dream flashed into my mind, and connected itself with the letter from Arundel. An idea came to me. I would let this song decide. Turning to Howard, I said:

"Howard, the last chord in this song, which we have never heard, shall tell me how my life is to continue. If its last chord trembles with plaintive minor strains, my life must continue as it is; if it resounds with the hope and buoyancy of the major chord, I will do as you ask me, and marry you."

"Glory be to the Chord!" he exclaimed, with outstretched arms.

"Remember, Howard," I said, drawing myself away, "I am in earnest. If that last chord is

a minor, my life must continue as it is—I will never marry."

"But it won't be, Helvy," he said confidently. "It's a major blooming with orange blossoms, you bet!" Howard was like a boy when pleased.

How little did Arundel Sunderland dream when he penned that last chord, that he was deciding my destiny!

I called to Lilian and Jessie, who were at the piano in the adjoining room, and, tearing the wrapper from the parcel, handed them the sheet of music.

"Girls," I asked, "will you play and sing this for me? I do not think you will find it difficult."

It was in the early afternoon twilight of a dull December day.

Howard and I sat without a light in the dear old parlor at home, the scene so closely associated with the great sorrows and happinesses of my life. The loved faces of my lost ones looked down on us from the pictures on the walls, and in the reflection mother's face seemed to smile a blessing.

As the first soft notes of the prelude came from the next room under Lilian's delicate touch, Howard took my hands in his. The opening phrase of the music awoke sad memories of my life.

Jessie's sweet voice began softly chanting in response to the weird harmony. Those happy, innocent girls little knew that they held a life's future in the balance. The crescendo increased as the tempo quickened and the key changed. Howard and I rose together as if under a magic spell. His face grew strained and serious; he, too, became deeply affected by the song that was to decide our destiny.

Minor strains mingled with the major; the climax was approaching, measure by measure, with impressive chords, to the stirring note in which all the accumulated passion of the song was gathered. They had reached the closing retard, and the long-sustained tones were soothing to me, until I remembered my vow.

My heart almost stood still and my nerves thrilled and tingled as the singer's last note

died away. Lilian was about to strike the last chord.

"O Lilian, Lilian!" I screamed, almost repenting my vow.

The chord was struck!

It was a plaintive minor, but one soft modulated note transposed it to a joyous major.

I turned to Howard, smiling, erect, and triumphant, but with a look in his eyes that promised me the unselfish love of his loyal heart, the refuge from life's cares and ills which every true woman prizes above all other earthly blessings.

"Thank God, it was not a minor chord," said Howard. His face was radiant with the light of love, and I was supremely happy.

The Heart Chord triumphed.

THE END

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